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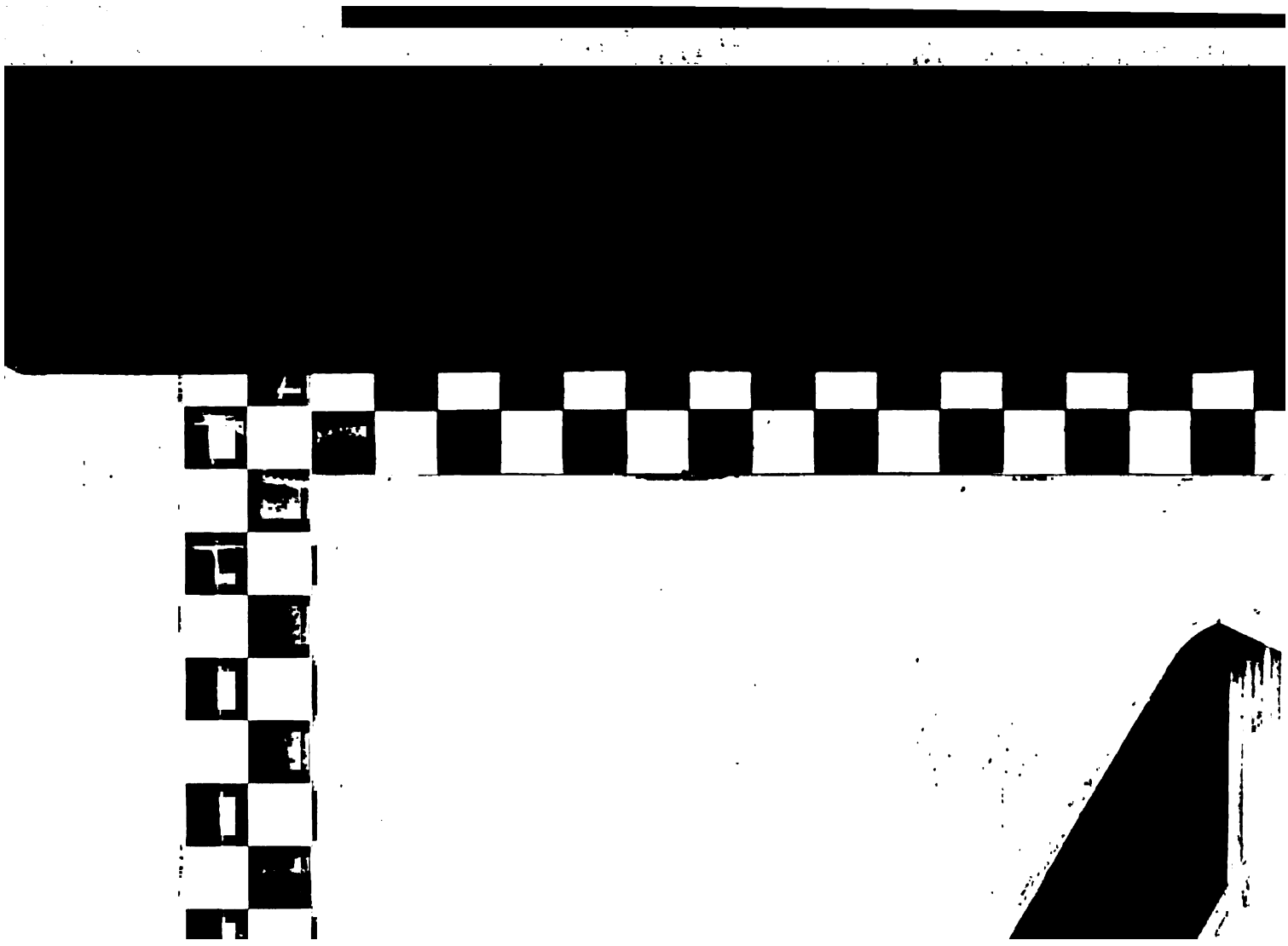

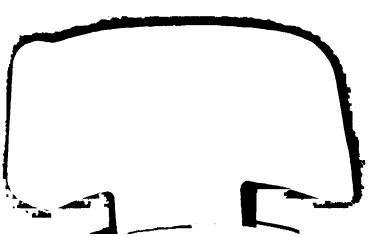

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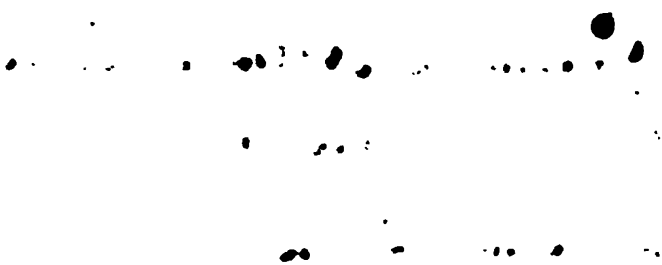

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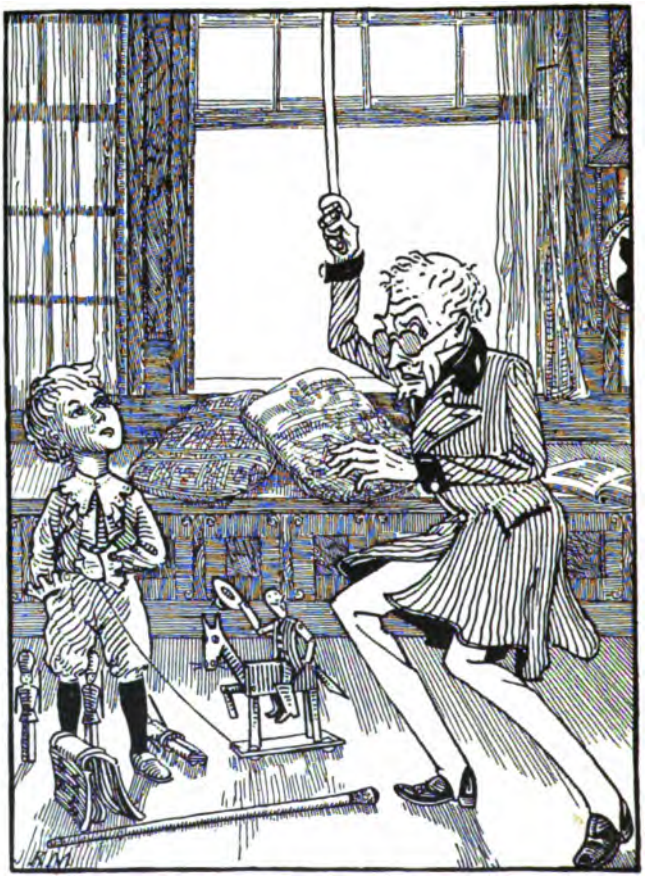

Grandfather's reminiscences of the Mexican War.

WALLY WANDEROON

AND HIS STORY-TELLING MACHINE

BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

AUTHOR OF UNCLE REMUS, GABRIEL TOLLIVER
THE MAKING OF A STATESMAN, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY KARL MOSELEY

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	THE CHILDREN VISIT MR. BOBBS,	8
II.	THEY MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF WALLY WANDEROON,	16
III.	THE GOOD OLD TIMES,	27
IV.	THE TALE OF JOHN THE SIMPLETON,	38
V.	THE TALE OF THE CRYSTAL BELL,	59
VI.	THE RED FLANNEL NIGHT-CAP,	116
VII.	MISS LIZA AN' DE KING,	155
VIII.	THE MOUSE PRINCESS,	181
IX.	THE BOY AND THE KING,	244
X.	THE SUN TAKES A HOLIDAY,	269
XI.	BROTHER RABBIT AND THE BEE,	279

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
GRANDFATHER'S REMINISCENCES OF THE MEXICAN WAR, *Frontispiece*	
BILLY BISCUIT RECEIVES THE THREE CHILDREN,	11
TRAVELLING BY THE PINE SAPLING,	21
SIMPLETON BEATING THE DUMMY BEFORE THE WIFE-BEATER'S HOUSE,	35
THE MAYOR, AND JOHN (IN DISGUISE), AT THE INN,	45
DENOUNCING THE MAYOR AS A ROGUE,	55
DANCING TO THE MUSIC OF HANS'S FLUTE,	68
LIZETTE AND THE OLD WOMAN,	69
THE BEAUTIFUL FAIRY ROSE HIGHER IN THE AIR,	81
THE SOLDIERS PASSING,	91
LIZETTE AND THE FOOTMAN ON THE BLIND PATH,	99
THE ROOM FULL OF TRINKETS,	109
A DARK STRANGER CAME TO OUR DOOR,	119
THE MOON SETTLING DOWN,	129
THE FIGHT IN THE TAVERN YARD,	141
THE ROGUE CHANGES INTO A ROLLING BALL,	145
THE STORY TELLER GETTING CLOSE TO NATURE,	151
BOBBY DE RAW AND THE SHOEMAKER'S DAUGHTER,	161
ARRIVAL OF THE KING'S DINNER,	171

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

THE COURT, ... 185

LARRO AND LARROLINE, ... 195

LARRO, FOLLOWED BY THE WOLF, LIGHTS HIS WAY WITH THE YELLOW CHERRY, ... 207

LARRO, BY MEANS OF HIS CANE, PUTS A RUFFIAN TO FLIGHT, ... 215

LARRO RESCUES THE MOUSE-PRINCESS, ... 227

LARRO, THROWN INTO PRISON, IS COMFORTED BY HIS LITTLE COMPANION, ... 233

THE PRINCESS INSISTS THAT LARRO RETURN TO FINISH THE CEREMONY, ... 239

THE LITTLE OLD MAN APPEARS AGAIN, ... 249

MACK AT WORK IN THE STABLE, ... 259

THE SUN TAKES PART OF A DAY OFF, AND COMES DOWN EARLY, ... 271

THE WHITE FOX AND THE SUN, ... 275

BRER RABBIT BRINGS THE BEE HOME, ... 283

THE BEE MAKES IT WARM FOR BRER FOX, ... 289

WALLY WANDEROON

I

THE CHILDREN VISIT MR. BOBBS

THE surrender of General Lee's army and the emancipation of the negroes made a great change in the prospects and prosperity of the Southern people, and brought about many results, which, while disagreeable in themselves, have since worked to the advantage of the whole country. Such country gentlemen as Mr. Abercrombie, who, it will be remembered, was the grandfather of Buster John and Sweetest Susan, were compelled to give up the wholesome lives they had been leading and look elsewhere for the means of making their living.

But Mr. Abercrombie was more fortunately situated than the great majority of the Southern planters. Some of the former slaves had gone off with the Federal army, and others had wandered away, seeking to better their condition. But, with one or two exceptions, they all came back to the old place, and announced that they were not only ready, but eager, to

take up their work where they had left it off. Under the changed conditions this could not be; but to each one who was willing to enter into a contract, the terms of which were simple and complete, a parcel of land was allotted, and he was duly installed as tenant. When the contract had been made plain to them, they were quite ready to make their marks on the document, and all were willing that Aaron, the son of Ben Ali, should act as general superintendent.

Under the terms of the contract, each tenant was to be provided with a half-year's supply of provisions, seed for sowing, and implements for tilling the soil. In the allotment of land to the tenants, the husband of Jemimy—that same Jemimy who was the mother of Drusilla—secured a parcel at the farthest limits of the plantation, which was nearly three miles from the home place, and not very far from the modest farm of Mr. Bobbs, where, as we all know, lived Billy Biscuit and Cawky the Crow.

This arrangement suited Jemimy and her husband very well. The success of Mr. Bobbs as a small farmer had made a very deep impression on both whites and blacks in that neighbourhood, and Jemimy's hus-

band made up his mind to discover how a good crop can be made in a bad season. For her part, Jemimy was very glad to get a vacation from the kitchen. She had been cooking for many years, and the business had grown somewhat monotonous, especially since the beginning of the war; an event that marked the decay of the old social customs that had kept the houses of the country gentlemen full of company half the year. With company in the house, Jemimy had no objection to cooking; in fact, she delighted in it, for then she had an excuse to practise it as an art. But day in and day out, with nothing to cook but the plainest food, and no company to serve as an excuse for an extra dish or two, cooking became tiresome, and Jemimy was glad to get away from the kitchen.

The only member of her family who was not glad of the change was Drusilla, and she didn't like it at all. She had been brought up with playmates to choose from, as it were, and she was in no mind to bury herself on the plantation away from the companionship of those who could amuse her, or whom she could amuse. She did very well while her daddy and some of his friends were building the cabin, which took no

long time, the structure being made of logs and plastered with clay, but when the cabin was completed, and they had settled down to a life as lonely as if they were in the midst of the wilderness, Drusilla began to grow very restless. She pined for the companionship of other children, and she was constantly besieging her mother with requests to be allowed to go back to the home place and spend the day with Buster John and Sweetest Susan.

The distance from Drusilla's new home to the Abercrombie place was nearly three miles, but little she cared for distance so long as she could find playfellows. She went as often as she could, but the more she went the more she wanted to go, until, finally, Jemimy had to "lay down de law" to her. Then Drusilla suddenly remembered that Mr. Bobbs lived not very far away, and that by going there she would have an opportunity to play with Billy Biscuit. Thereupon she began to plead with her mother to allow her to go and see Billy.

While she was begging and pleading one day, Jemimy heard someone calling from the head of the narrow lane that ran from the cabin to the road.

"Hush yo' big mouf! Hush, I tell you!" said Jemimy to Drusilla. "Don't you hear some un hollerin' dey head off? How kin I hear what deyer sain' ef you keep on rattlin' yo' tongue like a cow-bell?"

Then Jemimy, with real joy, heard the voice of Sweetest Susan calling her, and when it seemed that she could not be heard, Buster John came to her assistance and called. Drusilla, without waiting to ask her mother, ran down the lane to the children, and they were as glad to see her as she was to see them. They were going to spend the day with Billy Biscuit, who was a great favourite with them. The children didn't wait to ask Jemimy if Drusilla could go with them. Buster John ran down the lane and told her that they were going to see Billy Biscuit, and that Drusilla was going with them; that they were driving their pony, and that Drusilla would ride with them.

Jemimy was very well satisfied with this disposition of things. Nevertheless, she remarked as Buster John ran back to the road again: "Huh! dey never is ter fergit dat we-all done quit b'longin' ter'm."

It was no great distance to the home of Mr. Bobbs, and the children soon arrived there; but while they

were yet on the way—while they were in sight of the house—they saw a little old man by the side of the road. There is nothing strange in this bare statement of fact, but there was something very strange about the little old man. He had very short legs, and he wore a very tall hat, while the tails of his coat were not very far from the ground. If he saw the children, he gave no sign. He was poking about in the bushes with his short but stout walking-cane, and he paid no attention to passers-by. Buster John wanted to laugh, but prudence restrained him. Drusilla, not knowing what prudence is, felt obliged to giggle a little as they drove by the little old man.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," protested Sweetest Susan. "If you go on making fun of people that way you'll be sorry some day."

"Huh! what little bit er laughin' I done aint gwineter hurt de man. I hear um say dat some folks kin keep fum laughin' when dey see sump'n funny, but dat aint de way wid me. When I want ter laugh, I'm bleedze ter laugh er bust."

They went on and left the little old man poking and prodding about in the bushes with his walking-

cane, and soon forgot all about him in the pleasure they had at seeing Billy Biscuit again. A part of this pleasure grew out of the curious capers that Billy cut when he saw them. He ran round and round with his arms spread out as the ducks spread their wings when they are at play; and then, to cap the climax, he dropped on the floor, got on his all-fours, and, before you could count two, had changed himself into a pig; and before you could find out what kind of a pig he was—Chester-white or the razor-back variety —he had changed himself into a puppy, and galloped around barking gaily.

This was the way little Billy Biscuit showed his joy at seeing his friends again, for he was not much of a talker. They all had a good time together, until, finally, when they were tired of Spot the house dog, and of Cawky the tame crow, Buster John happened to remember the little old man they had seen by the roadside; and he no sooner remembered the little old man that he began to inquire about him. Indeed, Buster John asked so many questions, without catching his breath, that Miss Elviry, who was Mr. Bobbs's sister, had to warn him that he must ask one question

at a time, otherwise she would never be able to answer him.

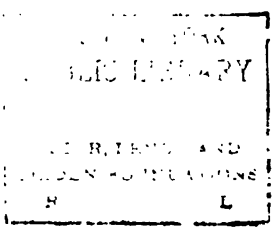
"Well, then," said Buster John, "who is this little old man, and what makes him look so funny?"

"I couldn't tell you that, honey," replied Miss Elviry. "He calls himself Wally Wanderoon, and says he came from a foreign country not far from here. He wanted my brother to visit it with him one day, but Brother thought maybe the man was up to some prank or other, and he didn't go. He comes around occasionally and meanders around. We think he is hunting for something that he lost a long time ago. First and last, I reckon we've all lost something that we'd like mighty well to find." She made this last remark with a sigh.

"Would he hurt anybody?" Sweetest Susan asked.

"Oh, no!" replied Miss Elviry. "Brother didn't know him well when he asked him to go with him to the foreign country not far from here. I heard Brother say the other day that he wisht the man would ask him ag'in; but he never has, and I hardly reckon he ever will. He says his name is Wally Wanderoon."

Billy Biscuit receives the three children.



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Buster John said no more, but he proposed to the others, after a while, that they go back down the road and see if they could find the little old man. Drusilla didn't like the idea much.

"You all des like you use ter be; freedom aint change you a bit." Drusilla had an idea that freedom was a matter that should change individuals, as well as the whole face of the world. Perhaps she was right in that, in spite of her ignorance; but freedom, like other blessings, must be boiled down in order to come at the essence thereof. "I aint got no better sense dan ter go wid you, but I tell you right now," she went on, "I aint gwineter run my head in no hornets' nes'. I done went wid you-all un' de spring, but I aint gwine in no mo' holes in de groun'. I tell you dat flat an' plain."

"To hear you talk," remarked Buster John scornfully, "people would think that you had been in great danger. But when did you get hurt when you went with us?"

"Well, I des ez soon be hurted ez ter be skeer'd ter death; an' ef I aint been skeer'd dey aint nobody been skeer'd. Dar's Miss Susan 'll tell you de same."

"Yes, I was frightened sometimes," said Sweetest Susan, laughing; "but I knew all the time that there was nothing to be frightened at. I knew it was all either a dream, or something very like a dream."

"Yes," said Buster John sarcastically,—boys of thirteen can be very sarcastic,—"Aaron is a dream, Mr. Thimblefinger is a dream; everything is a dream."

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" protested Sweetest Susan. "I meant that it was all so queer that it seemed like a dream. I remember that you said so yourself; and you know very well that you couldn't persuade mother that we hadn't been dreaming."

"Well, you know what grandfather said," Buster John insisted; "he said that when two or three people dream the same dream, it is not a dream, but a fact."

"Still, it all appeared like a dream to me," Sweetest Susan declared.

"Dream! I say dream!" exclaimed Drusilla indignantly. "You can't fool me; ef you wanter fool yo'-se'f go ahead an' do it, but don't come an' tell me 'bout dreamin' when you got bofe eyes wide open an' all yo' senses 'bout you."

"Well, we are not dreaming now," said Buster

John. "Let's go down the road and see if we can find the little old man."

"An' den what?" inquired Drusilla, with suspicion in her voice. "S'posen you fin' 'im, den what you gwineter do? You can't eat 'im, an' you can't take 'im home wid you. Ef you can't do nothin' wid 'im, what you want wid 'im? I bet you de man is doin' mighty well widout you, an' so long ez dat's de case, what you want ter fool wid 'im fer?"

"Oh! come on, and don't talk so much," said Buster John impatiently. "While we are talking here he may be getting away."

"I hope he'll hit you a crack on de shins wid his walkin'-cane!" exclaimed Drusilla, with great earnestness. "You-all aint got no mo' business foolin' wid dat man dan you got flyin'."

But Drusilla's protests were overborne, and if she went along it was through sheer force of habit, and not because she had any desire to go. She had a very vivid remembrance of their former adventures, and she always said that she'd rather have the nightmare every night than to go through them again.

II

THEY MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF WALLY WANDEROON

THE children had no difficulty whatever in finding the little old man. Indeed, as Drusilla suggested, it seemed that he had been waiting for them. He certainly left that impression on their minds. When they came up with him, he was still poking with his cane in the fence corners. He turned about when he heard them coming, and laughed. He had a most comical countenance; he seemed to be always on the point of winking familiarly at those to whom he talked, but he never winked. When just about to do so he would catch himself, and immediately look sober and serious. This made his appearance all the more comical. He had laughed or smiled so much that there were deep furrows between his nose and his cheeks, and he had a funny-looking wart on the side of his face, just above his chin. Such a countenance, topped by a tall stovepipe hat, was

very promising, and Sweetest Susan would have clapped her hands in ecstasy if she hadn't been afraid that the little old man would have misunderstood her meaning.

He turned about and looked at them very brightly. "Three howdies and a half!" he exclaimed. "Is it good-morning?"

Sweetest Susan looked at Buster John, Buster John looked at Wally Wanderoon, and Drusilla looked at first one and then the other. As for Billy Biscuit, who was the biggest man in the crowd, according to his own estimation, he looked at no one, but began to hunt for a bird's nest.

Finally Buster John began to understand what the little old man meant, and he told him good-morning very politely. The others followed his example, and the little old man began to smile again. "I thought it was a good morning," he said; "yes, I had that idea. I thought, too, that when a fellow gives out three howdies and a half, he ought to be entitled to at least one good-morning at least."

"What do you mean by three howdies and a half?" inquired Sweetest Susan.

"Why, three for you larger ones, and a half for the little chap. Suppose I had given him a whole howdy all by himself—what would he have done with it? Economy is the word. Why, when I was young——" He paused, waved his cane, sighed, and then turned his attention to poking and prodding in the fence corners.

"What are you looking for?" asked Buster John.

"Why, it's the simplest thing in the world," replied Wally Wanderoon. "I am looking for the Good Old Times we used to have."

"The Good Old Times!" exclaimed Buster John in astonishment.

"Yes, sir, nothing less. Talk about gold mines! Why, if I could find the Good Old Times we used to have, I'd be the richest man in the world before the end of the week. I'd divide 'em up with the people I met in the road, and they, in return, would give me everything they had. Why, I know men, and women too, who would give everything in this world if they could get back their share of the Good Old Times we used to have."

"Why do you search for them here?" inquired Buster John, who was somewhat puzzled.

"Why not here as well as elsewhere?" answered the little old man. This seemed to be reasonable, and Buster John made no reply. "More than that," the little old man went on, "if I could find 'em here, I'd unfold 'em right before your eyes, so you could see what they look like; I certainly would, and I wouldn't charge you a cent. Oh, they'd be well worth seeing, the Good Old Times we used to have. The sight of them would make your mouth water."

"I dunner what you-all talkin' about," remarked Drusilla, "but it sho would take sump'n mo' dan ol' times fer ter make my mouf water."

Wally Wanderoon looked at the negro girl as if he wanted to tip her a humourous wink, but he caught himself just in time, and, instead of winking, lifted his eyebrows so high that his tall hat was in danger of tilting off. "It's all right," he said. "The Painter that painted you painted us all, I reckon—some one colour and some another, and some betwixt and between."

"My mammy say dat it don't make no diffunce how black you is, ef yo' heart is in de right place," said Drusilla very solemnly.

"Speaking of the right place," remarked the little old man, "reminds me that it is about time for me to go home."

"Where do you live?" inquired Buster John.

"Not very far, if you count it by minutes, but a considerable step if you count it by miles. Perhaps you'd like to go with me," he said, looking at all of the youngsters.

"Can we come back when we choose?" asked Sweetest Susan.

"Why, certainly; but if you are afraid, you needn't go."

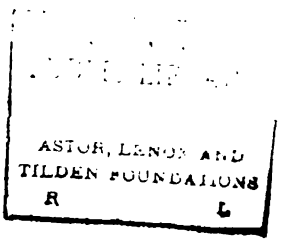
"Let's go," said Buster John bravely.

"Me'll do," declared Billy Biscuit.

"You-all kin go," remarked Drusilla, "an' I'll set here an' wait fer you. Ef you don't come back, I'll drive yo' pony home, an' tell yo' mammy whar I seed you last."

"She doesn't have to come," said the little old man, with his pleasant smile. "She's free to go or stay.

Travelling by the pine sapling.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She may miss something, but you two can tell her about it when you get back."

Now Drusilla was perhaps more anxious to go than any of the others, but she wanted Sweetest Susan to beg and coax her; and she wanted Buster John to insist. Strange to say, neither one of them seemed to care whether she went or stayed. This being so, she concluded to go along without further invitation. She would not go, however, without a fresh protest. "Ef I go," she said, "'twon't be kaze I wanter! it 'll be bekaze I wanter take keer er you-all, 'specially dat ar baby."

"Well, come on, then," said the little old man. "We haven't far to go and not much time to lose."

A panel of fence was down, and through this Wally Wanderoon went, followed by the children. On the other side of the gap there appeared to be what is called a blind path. Into this the little old man turned. He followed it perhaps twenty yards, and paused near a tall pine sapling, which was bare of limbs for some distance up the slender trunk.

"Here's our starting point," said Wally Wanderoon. "Catch hold, and mind you don't fall off when we get started good."

Billy Biscuit, as if he were used to making the trip, began to laugh as he grabbed the little old man's coat-tails. The others, following the example set them, caught hold of the trunk of the tree. "Now, then," said the little old man, "are you ready? One, two, three!"

At first there seemed to be no movement, but presently the children saw the trees and the ground gliding slowly by them. The fence which they had just come through joined in the movement, and then everything seemed to be going faster. The trees and the woods went whirling by them; and then, all of a sudden, they realised that they, and not the fences and fields, were moving; not only moving, but flying more rapidly than a railway train—and yet, they were holding on to the pine sapling, and when they looked down at their feet they seemed to be standing perfectly still. When the trees and the fields and the rest of the world, as it seemed to them, were flying by them so rapidly that they were merely blurs on the

eyesight, Drusilla thought she could stand it no longer.

"I dunner what gwineter happen," she said in a frightened voice, "but I know mighty well dat I'm bleedze ter turn loose. My head done got ter swimmin', an' I aint right well, nohow."

"Shut your eyes," suggested Wally Walderoon. As soon as she did this, she appeared to be standing still. And in a half a minute they were standing still; or rather the trees and fields had ceased to race by them.

"Now, then," said Wally Wanderoon, "you are in my country. You may see some queer things, but you need not be afraid; there is nothing to harm you."

The first queer thing that attracted their attention was discovered by Drusilla. Looking about her with great interest and curiosity, she found that everything was downhill. Thus a tree, which appeared to be downhill in one direction, would also appear to be downhill when you passed it and looked back.

Drusilla was not a scientist, but she saw at once that something was wrong, and she endeavoured to look

forward to results. "Ef you want ter worm yo'se'f off'n creation, des start one way, an' den turn roun' an' go back, an' keep on doin' dataway. Kaze when you start downhill you think it's uphill behime you, but when you turn 'roun' an' look back, it's downhill befo' an' behime. Now, what you gwineter do when dat's de case? How you gwineter git back whar you start fum?"

There was, however, a very simple and practical way of avoiding the calamity which Drusilla's sagacity had foreseen. It was so simple, indeed, that she wondered she had not thought of it herself. She observed that both Wally Wanderoon and Billy Biscuit were walking sidewise, so that although it was downhill before and behind them, they found themselves always on level ground.

"Dey aint no tellin' what we gwineter do nex'," Drusilla declared with some show of indignation. "We er walkin' sideways now, an' I bet 'twon't be long 'fo' we er gallopin' on our all-fours, er standin' on our heads—I bet you dat."

III

THE GOOD OLD TIMES

"YOU remember when you first saw me," remarked Wally Wanderoon, as he and the youngsters walked along together, "I was hunting for the Good Old Times we used to have. No doubt you wanted to laugh when I told you what I was doing. I have been young myself, and I know how young people feel towards old people, especially old people who are strangers to them. Now, if you were to hear your grandfather telling about the Mexican War, you would not think it strange; in fact, you would ask him to repeat all he knew about it; and after a while he would get in the habit of it. Then, possibly, you would grow tired of it, and the time would come that one of you would say to the other, 'I hear Grandfather coming; let's get away before he begins about the Mexican War.'"

Buster John looked somewhat sheepishly at Sweet-

est Susan, who exclaimed, "Oh, Brother! I told you someone would hear you!"

"No," replied Wally Wanderoon; "I don't think anyone heard him but you; but I knew your grandfather had been in the Mexican War, and I know, also, that he is growing old. Put these two things together and it's no trouble to guess what the youngsters are likely to say. Old as I am, I have been young, and so has your grandfather. Well—as I was going on to say—while he is sitting back in his easy chair talking about the Mexican War, I am going about trying to find the Good Old Times we used to have.

"It's no easy matter, I can tell you. I once hoped to find them in a lump, as you may say, but I have given up that idea. I know, now, that if I find them at all, I shall have to find them a piece at a time—an old song here and an old story yonder. Anyhow, I shall continue to look for them. One day not so very long ago, by the happiest chance, I found one of the relics of the Good Old Times we used to have. You couldn't guess what it is if you were to guess for the rest of the week. And I'm afraid you won't believe

me when I tell you. It is an old-fashioned story-telling machine."

"Why, I never heard of anything like that," said Sweetest Susan.

"I suppose not," replied Wally Wanderoon. "They were very scarce, and those who had them only permitted a few of their closest friends to see them. I heard of one gentleman, a very clever man, too, who chanced to be a little talkative about the one he owned —he had bought it from a Russian peddler—and he was tried and hanged as a partner of Satan. His machine was made like a hand organ, and he turned a handle when he wanted it to tell a story. Well, well, he suffered in a good cause."

By this time they had come to a small house in a clump of trees. "This," said Wally Wanderoon, "is where I live when I'm at home. Come in and I'll show you my story-telling machine. It is not a genuine one, it is only a make-believe, but it does very well."

In a corner of the room in which they found themselves, there was a tall piece of furniture resembling a narrow cupboard. Near the top there was a small

opening, which turned out to be the orifice through which the story was told. Wally Wanderoon went to this cupboard and gave it a sharp rap with his walking-cane.

"Hey, there!" he cried; "what are you up to in there?"

"Goodness gracious!" a voice replied; "do you want to frighten me to death? Who are you and what do you want?"

"You know who I am well enough; if it was feed time you'd know what I wanted."

"Well, you never seem to know what I want," replied the story-telling machine.

"Why, there's a man in there," said Buster John.

"Of course," replied Wally Wanderoon. "The man is a necessary part of the story-telling machine."

"And he's fat," cried Sweetest Susan, whose curiosity had prompted her to look through a crack in the cupboard.

"Certainly," answered Wally Wanderoon. "In the history of the world no lean man ever told a pleasant story. I have caught and pickled this man, as you may say, because he is one of the old-fashioned

story-tellers. He's the last of his kind so far as I know, and is one of the worst. You wouldn't think it, but even here, where he is caged and kept away from his kind, he tries his best to fall into modern methods. You listen carefully, and you'll see how he tries to imitate the style of those who think that in telling a story they have to explain everything, and even tell where the story grew."

Wally Wanderoon went to the cupboard, rapped on it sharply, and said, "Wake up in there! Shake yourself together. Here are some children who have come to spend the day with me, and they want to hear one of your stories. If it pleases them you may tell as many as you choose."

A shuffling sound was heard in the cupboard, and then the old-fashioned story-teller cleared his throat and began.

"In its original form the story that I am about to tell——"

"Wait! hold on there!" cried Wally Wanderoon. He was furious with anger. "Didn't you hear me say as plain as I could speak, that we wanted an old-fashioned story?"

"I was simply trying to explain that the story I am going to tell is a part of the folklore——"

"I won't have it!" cried Wally Wanderoon, stamping his feet. "We want no prefaces, and no footnotes; we don't care where the story comes from. What am I feeding you for?"

"But you must remember," insisted the poor story-teller, "that this is an age when even the children insist on a scientific——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon, puffing out his cheeks with anger. "Figs and fiddlesticks! Why do you want to try to show off in this way? We come to you for a story, and here you are running about like a wild calf in a meadow. I tell you I won't have it!"

"Well," said the story-teller with a long-drawn sigh, "once upon a time—— How does that suit you?"

"Fine!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "That's the way to begin a story. Now go ahead."

IV

THE TALE OF JOHN THE SIMPLETON

"ONCE upon a time there was a great city built upon a plain. It had a very large population, but the great majority of its inhabitants were prosperous because they were industrious. Of course some of the people were poor, for this is the way of the world; but it frequently happens that poverty is a greater blessing than riches. The inhabitants of this city were very lightly governed. They paid few tithes, and the bulk of those were expended in laying out pleasure grounds and making other desirable improvements that all the people could enjoy. There were no crimes committed, there were no disputes of any moment, and as a result cobwebs were growing on the door of the temple of justice. Such lawyers as had begun to practise in this city were compelled to move away or go into the grocery business.

"There was but one idle fellow in the city. This

was John the Simpleton, who had been permitted to grow up in idleness because it was thought he was nothing more than a half-wit. He was indeed a queer character, and was always engaged in some strange adventure. On one occasion he volunteered to gild the spire of the Cathedral, which was the pride of the town. He did a pretty job of work, but when he came down he left his hat hanging on the topmost pinnacle. His excuse was that he left it there to keep the rain off the face of a saint, whose portrait was exposed to the weather. He made no charge for what he had done, and for a long time went about bareheaded, his long yellow hair blowing about in the breezes.

"On one occasion, when a man had been cruel to his wife, John the Simpleton passed by the man's house leading a dog. Finding that this attracted no attention, he turned about and led the dog up and down in front of the house. Finally the good woman came to the door and asked him the meaning of the performance.

"'I am a schoolmaster,' he replied, 'and I would teach you a lesson.'

"'What is the lesson?' she inquired.

Simpleton beating the dummy before the wife-beater's house.

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"'It is better to lead a dog than to be led by one. When is your husband about?'

"'In the early morning,' replied the woman. 'Very well,' said John the Simpleton. 'To-morrow morning when you hear a fuss at your door, send him out to see what the trouble is.'

"So the next morning, when the good woman heard a tremendous squalling at the door, she ran and told her husband, saying she was afraid to so much as put her head out at the window. The man went to the door and there saw John the Simpleton thwacking a stuffed figure made in the semblance of a woman. 'What are you doing there, rascal?'

"'Beating my wife,' said the young fellow. 'I caught the disease at your door.' The man, angry and ashamed, made an effort to drive the young fellow away, whereupon John the Simpleton fell upon him and gave him a severe trouncing, which the neighbours declared he well deserved.

"On another occasion he went to the shop of a man who was known to give short weight, especially to women and children, rapped on the counter, and said he wanted a shilling's worth of butter. Then he

changed his mind, and said he would prefer bread instead. He received the bread, and was going out when the man called after him. 'Pay me for my bread,' he said. 'I gave you the butter for it,' replied John the Simpleton. 'Then pay me for the butter,' said the man. 'But I have bought no butter,' protested the Simpleton. 'Do you take me for a child or a woman, that you try to swindle me in this manner?'

"The young fellow spoke in so loud a voice, and his bearing was so bold, that the shopkeeper could only shake his head, and warn John the Simpleton never to come into his place again.

"But one day the inhabitants of this favoured city —the birthplace and home of John the Simpleton— were awakened early one morning by the woful cries of the Mayor, who was going about the streets wringing his hands, and declaring that he had been robbed the night before of a large quantity of gold and silver. The people were horrified. Within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant such a high-handed crime had never before been committed within the boundaries of the town. There had been petty thieving, but the articles stolen were hardly valuable

enough to cause a complaint from those who lost them.

"Among those attracted by the cries of the Mayor was John the Simpleton. He followed the worthy man about, and watched him with so much interest and curiosity that his example was followed by other people, and pretty soon the Mayor had half the city at his heels. He was a very dignified official, and had never before been known to give way to his feelings. There would have been a great sympathy for him but for the antics of John the Simpleton, who followed close behind him, but this queer fellow, who had discovered that the Mayor's woe was no deeper than his eyelid, managed to turn the whole affair into ridicule, and before the procession had gone a great way, the mob was shouting and laughing as a crowd does on a holiday occasion. The Mayor tried hard to escape, but wherever he went, the people, led by John the Simpleton, followed close at his heels.

"At last the worthy official took refuge in the church, but as the church was open to all, the crowd followed. The Mayor endeavoured to escape by a side door, but John the Simpleton had anticipated this

movement, and as the Mayor disappeared behind the side door John beckoned to the crowd, and they poured out into the street, and the Mayor found himself in the same case as before. Seeing that escape was impossible, the Mayor turned on his heel and faced the crowd.

"'Good people,' he said, 'what would you have?'

"'Your Honour, we would hold a convention,' replied John the Simpleton. 'Your loss is our loss. You are full of grief, and we are full of anger. We desire to make ourselves heard.'

"So the Mayor, nothing loth, led the way to the town hall, and there a mass meeting was held. In this meeting the Simpleton took the lead, and he caused to be passed resolutions strongly denouncing the wretched creature who had been so presumptuous as to rob the beloved Mayor of the city of even a small portion of his worldly goods. No serious effort was made to catch the thief, for it was the common opinion that the strong resolutions that had been adopted at the mass meeting would be sufficient to convince the criminal that he could not carry on his nefarious trade in that city.

"But it turned out that the thief was more heartless than the good citizens supposed any human being could be. In a very few days the town was alarmed and indignant at the announcement that another prominent member of the community had been robbed at dead of night, at an hour when he could not, in reason, be supposed to be in a position to defend his property. And then the old saying that it never rains but it pours, was newly illustrated. Hardly a week passed that there was not a bold robbery committed. Indeed, the thief was as busy as if he were paid by the day to rob the rich.

"These robberies finally grew so frequent that the citizens felt that they were compelled to take some measure to protect themselves. There was the semblance of a guard, and there were four watchmen at the four gates of the city, but the watchmen, as well as the members of the guard, would have resigned their places before they would have regarded any of their fellow-citizens with suspicion. Yet it became necessary for someone to be suspected so that the guilty might be brought to justice; and, after a while it began to dawn on the mind of John the Sim-

pleton that he was suspected to be the guilty party. He had a very shrewd idea of the origin of these suspicions, for he knew that the Mayor had never forgiven him for setting the example to the mob on the day when that functionary was bewailing his losses in the public streets.

"Now, though John the Simpleton knew of these suspicions, and knew where they came from, he seemed to pay little attention to them; in fact he appeared to care as little what was said about himself as he cared what was said about his neighbours. At the same time he made up his mind to discover the thief if such a thing were possible. Other people might suspect him, but he had his own suspicions. He had a scheme which, by the aid of his uncle, who had just returned from the wars, he promptly carried out.

"It was a very bold scheme, but it was no bolder than the uncle; and as for John the Simpleton, it was well known by those who had tried his temper that he was not lacking in courage. On the night of the day that the uncle returned from the wars, where he had been engaged in fighting the Spaniards, a very distinguished company was gathered in the public room

of the largest inn in the city, for it was here that the chief dignitaries of the town, as well as the prominent citizens, were in the habit of meeting. They met here because the inn was a roomy one, and after the affairs of the city were discussed they could join in the friendly social intercourse that was one of the chief characteristics of the inhabitants. Here they could sip their beer, smoke their pipes, and, at their leisure, hear the latest news from abroad as from time to time it was brought in by travellers.

" It was into this company that John the Simpleton elbowed his way after he had finished his evening meal. The disguise that he had assumed was complete. He had placed on his face a fierce beard and mustachio, and had buckled him round with a belt from which a long rapier hung. Thus equipped he had no difficulty in mimicking the careless swagger of a soldier. He was tall and thin, but he was also strong, and he hustled the company about with scant ceremony, as became a rough inhabitant of the camps.

" Assuming a free and an easy address, the Simpleton soon fell into conversation with those about him, one of whom chanced to be the worthy Mayor. ' You

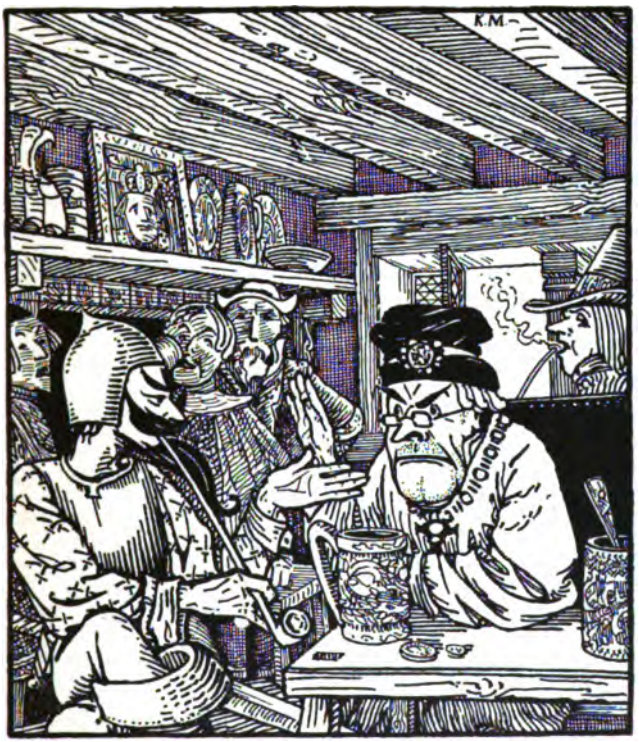
have a goodly city here, a goodly inn, and a right jolly landlord,' remarked John the Simpleton. 'My own companions would be here but for the rumours we have heard on the way. As it is, they are not too comfortably housed some furlongs to the south at the River Inn.'

"'I know the place,' remarked the Mayor; 'but pray tell us the nature of the rumours you have heard on the road.'

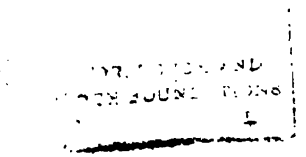
"'Why, nothing less than this goodly city is infested with a band of thieves who ply their trade not only in the dark hours of night, but in the broad light of day.'

"But surely, my good Captain, your troopers, who have doubtless seen service in the war with the Spaniard, are not afraid of a gang of thieves and prowlers.'

"'The Captain stroked his fierce mustachio and laughed. 'Good sir,' he said, 'it was as much as I could do to persuade my men to remain peacefully where they are. They were keen to visit this place and see for themselves a city which deserves to be raided and looted by honest soldiers because of the



The Mayor, and John (in disguise), at the inn.



willingness with which the inhabitants submit to the daily and nightly robberies that are said to take place. My Lieutenant of the Red Guard was furious when I left him, and to prevent him from stirring up a spirit of insubordination among my men I gave him permission to follow me here within an hour.'

"'But, my fine Captain, how are we to help ourselves? In what way are we to catch the thief who is harrying our citizens? Since we have never been pestered in this way hitherto, we are not expert at taking thieves. We have our suspicions, but we have no proof. Perhaps you will aid us with your advice.'

"'I can give you only my opinion,' replied the Captain, 'and that is that the thief can be caught without serious trouble. I have been in your city but a short while, yet I think it would be an easy matter for me to lay my hand on the thief within the next hour.'

"The only reply that was made to this remark, which seemed to be in the nature of a boast, came from a corner where an honest and an unpretentious burgher was enjoying his mug of beer. 'Try him, your honour,' said this burgher to the Mayor. 'Put

him to the test; offer a reward for the rogue, and then perhaps this honourable Captain will think it worth his while to discover and arrest the villain.'

"'Not so,' said the Captain, knitting his heavy brows together. 'Since the wars are over my men and myself have found profitable employment in conveying treasure from one city to another. We have now in charge a number of bags of bullion to be delivered in Brachen-on-the-Vee. We have no time to turn aside to hale a petty thief who contents himself with treasures of small value.'

"'It is plain,' remarked the Mayor with considerable animation, 'that you are not acquainted with our thief. He has as keen an eye for what is valuable as any man in the kingdom.'

"There was a pause here, and the Mayor sat with his hand on his fat chin as if reflecting. Presently he turned to the Captain, saying, 'What security do you give when you undertake to convey treasure from city to city?'

"'First, I examine the treasure, and then, according to its value, leave one of my jewels—a pearl or a diamond—in the hands of my patrons.'

"There was a further silence on the part of the Mayor; and the four dignitaries of the city, who sat at table with him, and the Captain, were also silent; but the plain citizen in the corner was very noisy. He kept on declaring that it was the duty of the authorities to offer a reward for the arrest of the thief, and that the whole business should be placed in the hands of the gallant Captain.

"'Pooh!' cried the Mayor finally, 'what do you know of affairs of this kind? The thief will be caught in due time, and all his booty returned to the rightful owners. We shall catch him, and if we have no proof he will be put on the rack. A twist or two of that old rack has made better men speak out.'

"'You are right,' said the Captain. 'I think the thief and his companions will be taken sooner than they imagine.'

"'Then you think this rogue has assistants, then?' inquired the Mayor.

"'Assuredly,' replied the pretended Captain. 'He has assistants, but he is displeased with them. He has been compelled to take them into his confidence one after another in order to carry out his plans. He has

four companions, and he would willingly get rid of them.'

"'If what you say is true,' said the Mayor, with a very serious countenance, 'the matter should be looked into at once. But first, and at your convenience, I should like to have a private conference. There are a number of us here who are determined to place our valuables in a place of safety until this rogue and his companions are caught, and I desire to get your advice on the subject.'

"It was arranged that the Mayor should return to the inn in the course of an hour, when the Captain would be ready to confer with him. By this time all of the company had retired except the four city dignitaries who had been sitting at the table with the Captain and the Mayor. They were whispering together when John the Simpleton strode from the room twisting his fierce-looking mustachio.

"From the inn, John the Simpleton returned to his own dwelling, where he had left the old soldier who was his uncle. This sturdy soldier calmly smoked his pipe while his nephew told him of all that had occurred. 'They call you a simpleton, do they? Well,

by the good King Campion! you are a lad after my own heart, and what you propose to do is as much to my taste as any adventure I ever had. Set the pace, my lad, and I'll follow you; and if you hear a neck crack before the night is over be not disturbed. 'Tis a trick I learned while with the Free Companions."

"And so, when the old soldier's pipe was out, he put on his coat and belt, girded on his short sword, and keeping step with his nephew followed him to the inn. They blustered into the public room as became men who were careless of giving offence to those unused to the ways of a camp.

"'They sit late here, my Captain,' said the old soldier, fixing his bold black eyes on the group of dignitaries. 'No wonder thieves take the town. I warrant I could carry off the families of those who sit late at the inn guzzling beer. We shall hear strange tales presently.'

"'Ay,' replied the Captain, 'the worthy Mayor has something to whisper in my ear, and I warrant you there will be a scene before the night is over.'

"With that the two began to strut about the room,

and they had the appearance of being rough customers. Finding that they could not provoke the four dignitaries into a conversation of any kind or on any subject, the pretended Captain and his Lieutenant of the Red Guards called to the landlord, engaged another room, and in this extra room they awaited the return of the Mayor.

"They had not long to wait. This worthy official was in quite a state of mind, and he was so zealous for the good name of his city that he was beforehand in knocking at the Captain's door. He was directed by the landlord to the room that had been reserved for the Lieutenant, and his surprise was great when he discovered that the Captain had a companion, though he made no objection when he was told that this companion was the Lieutenant of the troop which had charge of the treasure that from time to time was entrusted to the captain's care.

"'A very worthy man, I have no doubt,' said the Mayor with a patronising air, 'and his presence is timely. There is so much uncertainty here, and the people have been so sadly demoralised by the operations of this thief, that a few of us have concluded to

have our valuables transported to a place of safety. I have a brother in a neighbouring town who will gladly take charge of these valuables once they are in his hands. As the governor of the town, I am truly sorry to set such an example; but even an official must needs take care of his own. Once the thief is caught and disposed of, and property is safe, I shall engage you to convey the treasure back.'

"'As to this thief,' said the pretended Captain, 'have you no idea as to his identity?'

"'We know him well enough,' said the Mayor; 'but we have no proof against him. He is called John the Simpleton, but my opinion is that he is a much shrewder fellow than he pretends to be. But we shall see.'

"'I saw the Simpleton as I entered the town,' replied the pretended Captain, 'and I think you are correct in your opinion of him. Conclude your bargain with my Lieutenant here. I have a little business with my friend the landlord.'

"With that the Captain went down the narrow stairway, entered the public room, and seated himself at the table with the four dignitaries, who were await-

ing the Mayor. 'It is all up with you, my friends,' he said, slapping the table with his hands.

"'What do you mean?' they cried, rising from their seats in great disorder.

"'Easy! Speak softly. The Mayor declares that you gentlemen are the robbers, and that he has tolerated your practices to avoid a scandal in the town.'

"'The villain! Why, he is the thief—he is the rogue. Where is he? bring us to him, and you'll soon see whether we are the thieves!'

"'Softly!' said the Captain. 'This is a business that should be done quietly. You have families; the Mayor has a family. There is no need for making an outcry. The thing to do is to prevent the Mayor from having you arrested; that is his purpose, as he says.'

"This sort of talk was not calculated to soothe the dignitaries. Their cheeks were puffed out with indignation, and they paced up and down the room denouncing the Mayor in the roundest terms. The noise they made attracted the attention of the landlord, and passers-by, perceiving that something unusual was occurring, crowded around the door. Standing there,

Denouncing the Mayor as a rogue.

their astonishment was great when they heard the associates of the Mayor denouncing him as a rogue. The crowd continued to grow, and by-and-bye the pressure of curiosity became so great that the public room of the inn became filled with citizens who heard the dignitaries denouncing the Mayor as a most unmitigated rogue and villain.

"When the crowd had filled the room, the Captain made his way up the stair, went to the room where the Mayor was bargaining with the Lieutenant, and beckoned to him. 'Here is a pretty howdy-do,' he said; 'come to the head of the stairs and listen. Your friends in the taproom are making short work of your reputation.'

"And such was the case. When the Mayor heard the denunciations of his friends, whose anger was at white heat, he made an effort to escape, but the Lieutenant was of another mind. 'You will remain with me, my friend,' he said, laying his hand somewhat heavily on the shoulder of the official.

"By that time, John the Simpleton had taken off his beard and his fierce mustachios, and in a very few words he explained to the assembled citizens the mean-

ing of the scene which they were witnessing. The Mayor and the four officials were at once placed under arrest, and the next day a public meeting was held, at which John the Simpleton was chosen Mayor. He not only saw that the thieves were properly punished, but he brought about a great many reforms in the government of the city, so that the people grew more prosperous than ever. And when John the Simpleton died they built him a large monument, and to this day it stands there as a memorial to his wisdom and justice."

V

THE TALE OF THE CRYSTAL BELL

"WELL, how did you like the old-fashioned story?" inquired Wally Wanderoon, when the story-teller began to snore, as a sign that the tale was finished.

"I liked it pretty well," replied Buster John, "only I don't see why they didn't have some fighting, especially when a real soldier was brought in."

"It may be a good story," remarked Sweetest Susan, "but it isn't the kind I like."

"I speck it's 'bout ez good ez any un um," said Drusilla. "All dem kind er tales is a way off fum me. I don't keer no mo' 'bout one er de folks dan what I does 'bout de yuthers."

"What sort of a story do you like?" inquired Wally Wanderoon, turning to Sweetest Susan. The little girl blushed and hung her head. "I mean the story wan't the kind I like best. I'm glad there was no fighting in it."

"Oho!" cried Buster John; "that's just like a girl."

"If I had my choice," said Sweetest Susan, "I prefer a fairy story, and then, next to that, the animal stories that Aunt Minervy Ann sometimes tells."

Wally Wanderoon rapped on the box or cage. "Wake up in there! Stir your stumps! What about a fairy story?"

"Humph!" exclaimed the story-teller. "Why, fairy stories have been out of fashion so long that I've almost forgotten how they go. I used to hear my grandmother tell them when I was a wee bit of a chap, and they were all different from those that I afterwards read in books. I wish I could remember them. I have one in mind now, but it is very slight; indeed, I am not sure that it is worth telling."

"Tell it! tell it!" cried Wally Wanderoon. "Good gracious! why do you hesitate? Do you expect me to board and lodge you for nothing?"

"Well, I have plenty of boards all around me—but do you call this place a lodging?"

"It is better than no shelter," replied Wally Wanderoon. "You've been wailing for a chance to tell

stories, and now that I have gone out on the highway and gathered up what you might call a mixed audience, here you are complaining, and making excuses. Why don't you say your throat is sore, as the ladies do when they are asked to sing?"

"Why, I never thought of that," replied the story-teller. "It is worth remembering. But I have no objection to telling the story, provided no one will make remarks about it when it is finished.

"Once there lived in a far country a little girl named Lizette——"

"Now that sounds something like it!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon with enthusiasm. "It reminds me of the Good Old Times we used to have. Go right ahead in that strain, and I'll double your wages." So the story-teller began again—

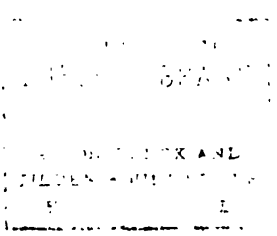
"Once upon a time, in a far country, there lived a little girl named Lizette. She was a very sweet little girl, bright, clever, and kind-hearted. Her father and mother were very poor. In the cold weather they eked out a scanty living by gathering the dead branches of trees in the forest, and selling them to their more

prosperous neighbours, who used them as fuel. In the spring Lizette's father and mother gathered herbs and simples and sold them to the apothecary in the neighbouring village. In the summer they helped their neighbours with their crops, and in the fall they helped to gather grapes.

"This was the season that Lizette loved, for at that time all the youths and maidens assembled in the vineyards and played and sang even while they were at work. And at the close of the day, especially when the round moon was peeping at them through the trees, Merry. Hans, of Hendon, would play on his flute while the others danced. At such times it frequently happened that the lords and ladies from the castles near by would come in their fine coaches and watch the merry-making.

"All the workers in the fields and vineyards were poor, but Lizette's father and mother were the poorest of all. They were the poorest, but they were just as happy as any of the rest, for they had their pretty little daughter, they had their health, and they had good appetites, and sound sleep visited them when the day was over. They had few troubles and no sor-

Dancing to the music of Hans's flute.



rows, save as they were called upon to sympathise with such of their neighbours as had illness or death in the house.

"Never believe that poverty means unhappiness or sour discontent. It is the poor who are generous and charitable, and it is the honest poor who have the soundest sleep and the healthiest minds. Thus it was with the father and mother of Lizette. They were not only contented, but they were thankful their condition was no worse. But as their little daughter grew older and more beautiful they often wished that they were able to give her the accomplishments that would fit her beauty and her brightness.

"When she heard them expressing their regrets that they were too poor to do as much for her as they could wish, she would shake her head and laugh, saying, 'If I had all the accomplishments you desire me to have, I am afraid I should be discontented here. It is better as it is. I can sing as loud and dance as long as any of the children; I have a good frock for Sunday; and though, as we know, the times are hard, it is not often that I am hungry.'

"The father and mother said nothing, but they

thought to themselves that the sweet disposition of their child was only another reason why she should fare better than they had fared. Old people, as you will discover, live life over again in the lives of their children. But these old people had no way to carry out their desires. They could only sigh when they thought that their lovely child would have to follow in their footsteps. They sighed, but they were not unhappy. Everything would be as a higher Power willed, and with this they were content.

"Meanwhile Lizette was growing more beautiful day by day. The colour of the sky was reflected in her eyes, and the sunshine was caught and held in the meshes of her golden hair. Her frock was scanty and coarse, but somehow she wore her ragged frock and her wooden shoes in a way that made one forget these signs of poverty.

"The young girl enjoyed the singing and the dancing when the grapes were gathered; indeed, her feet were the nimblest, and her voice the sweetest; but her greatest pleasure was to ramble about in the great forest near which she lived. The opportunity for this came on Sunday afternoons and on the feast days of

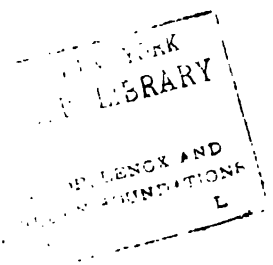
the saints. At such times she could always be found in the forest, and here she was at home in the truest sense. She talked to the trees in a familiar way, and she was sure they understood her, for their boughs would wave and their leaves flutter when she spoke to them; and when a sudden storm came up they would shelter her with their foliage. She knew the birds, and the birds knew her, and they were so fond of her that they never made any loud outcry when she came near their nests. They had known her ever since she could toddle about, for she used to wander in the forest even when she was very small.

"Indeed, the forest had been her nurse. When her father and mother, in earning their scanty living, were compelled to go away from home, they always went away satisfied that she would be cared for in some way. Left alone, she would toddle off into the woods, and when she grew tired of looking at the birds and the big butterflies that fluttered over the wild flowers, she would stretch herself on the grass under the sheltering arms of a wild thorn, or in a bower made by the woodbine, and there sleep as sweetly and as soundly as if she were rocked in the richest of cradles.

As she grew older she continued to ramble in the forest. In some mysterious way she seemed to absorb its freshness and its beauty, and she imbibed the innocence of the wild creatures who came to know her as one of their companions. And as she grew in beauty she grew in strength, and her strength gave her gentleness. Her eyes shone with dewy tenderness, and the story they told could be understood even by a wounded bird that lay panting in her path, or by any creature that was seeking refuge or succour.

"One day—it was in the opening month of spring—while Lizette was rambling about in her beloved forest admiring the flowers that were beginning to bloom, and making believe to catch the butterflies, though every butterfly in the forest knew better than that—she saw a very large one hovering near her. More than once she reached out her hand to take it, but it was always just out of reach. It was the largest and most beautiful butterfly she had ever seen. It had tremendous wings, marked in black and gold, though when the sun shone on them the black changed to purple in the light.

Lizette and the old woman.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"Something in the movements of this butterfly compelled her to watch it, and after a while she thought it was acting in a very singular way. When she went forward the butterfly seemed to be contented, but when she paused or turned aside from the course in which she had been going, it fluttered about her head and face and played such pranks that anyone but the tender Lizette would have been annoyed. More than once she playfully tried to catch it, but at such times it was always just out of reach.

"Knowing the birds and the butterflies better than most people, Lizette came to the conclusion after a while that this particular butterfly meant something by its antics, so she went in the direction which it seemed to desire her to go. Flying before her and darting about, now to the right, now to the left, but always leading in one direction, the butterfly went far into the forest. And presently Lizette forgot all about the butterfly, for there before her, lying prone on the ground, was an old woman. She seemed to be very ill or dying, and she presented a very pitiable spectacle. Her grey hair was hanging from under her head-covering, and her clothing was nothing but

a collection of patches. She was groaning and moaning, and appeared to be in a terrible plight.

"As soon as she saw the deplorable condition of the old woman, and heard her moans and groans, Lizette ran forward, kneeled on the ground beside the unfortunate creature, stroked her hair away from her face, and tried to find out what the trouble was.

"The old woman opened her eyes and made a hideous face at the young girl. 'You are trying to rob me,' she cried, 'and you are over-young to be a thief.'

"'I rob you, grandmother!' exclaimed Lizette, blushing at the unexpected charge. Then, remembering the pitiable condition of the old woman, she said, 'We will talk about it when you are better. First tell me what the trouble is.' She took the old woman's head in her lap, in spite of the ugly faces she made, and did her best to soothe and comfort her.

"But the old woman would not be soothed. She continued to charge Lizette with robbing her, and tried to drive her away. But the young girl was too tender-hearted to be driven. She could hardly re-

strain her tears at the repeated charges of the old woman, but she continued to do the best she could for her, which was very little, since the poor old creature refused to say where she was hurt or how. Between her moans and groans she made faces at Lizette, continued to call her a thief, and did everything she could to drive her away.

"But the child would not leave her. She swallowed her mortification the best she could, and continued to minister to the old woman, although she knew not what to do.

"Finally she thought she saw a change come over the old woman's face. Her features grew more composed, and it was high time, for when her countenance was puckered up with pain, or when she was making grimaces at Lizette, she was not pretty by any means. She ceased to groan and moan, and presently when her countenance was smoothed out, and the wrinkles had disappeared, she was a very pleasant-looking old woman.

"Wonderful to relate, she grew younger as Lizette caressed her. Her hair ceased to be grey, the patches disappeared from her clothes, her withered

cheeks and hands filled out and became plump, and when she arose to her feet, which she did in no long time, she was as beautiful as a dream. Her hair, which had seemed to be grey, shone like spun silver, and her clothing, which had seemed so old and ragged, glittered in the sunshine like satin.

"'Oh, how could I think that one so beautiful was old and ugly!' cried Lizette.

"'Stranger things than that happen every day,' replied the beautiful creature. 'I was old and ugly when I caused you to be brought here, but now I am what your good heart has made me; this is what your kindness has done.'

"'But you called me a thief,' said Lizette, blushing at the remembrance of the harsh things the pretended old woman had said about her.

"'My dear, that was the result of a bargain I had made. We have our little disputes and differences in the country that is all about you, but which you are not permitted to see. I, for one, have been watching you since your birth, and when I saw you the other day tenderly nursing a poor wounded butterfly which had been chilled by the night air, I said that you

were as good as you are beautiful.' At this Lizette blushed again, but this time from pleasure. 'The remark was overheard by a friend of mine who has a very good disposition, but who is somewhat suspicious of the good qualities that are sometimes ascribed to mortals.

"'She has a good deal of power, too, this friend of mine, for some day, the day when the moon changes at seven minutes past seven o'clock on Friday, she will be the queen of our small kingdom. And so when I insisted that you were as good as you are beautiful she proposed a test. This test is what you have just witnessed. I became an old woman, and it was part of the test that I should do my best to make you angry. I was to try to frighten you with my grimaces, and I was to call you a thief, and all sorts of ugly names, and if you had gone away in a fit of anger I should have been compelled to remain an old woman and go about in rags for five and two years.

"'You see how much I trusted to your sweet temper and your kind heart. I was a little frightened for myself when you were about to cry, but I soon saw that your good heart would triumph over your pride.

It was a trial for you, and, as a reward, I have something for you."

"From under her shining mantle she drew a tiny casket, covered with rich-looking cloth, plush or velvet. Touching a spring, the lid of the casket flew up, disclosing a crystal bell, which was suspended from a little rod of gold, the two ends of which rested on the inner frame of the casket. It was a beautiful bell in a lovely setting. It glistened in the sun like a large diamond, and in that day there was no jeweller so expert that he could have told it was not a diamond.

"'This bell,' said the fairy—Lizette had already recognised the beautiful creature as a fairy whose good deeds the older people were always praising—'is a magic bell. It has no clapper, and yet it will ring. There is a little hammer in the bottom of the casket, and this will rise and strike the bell when the time has come to warn you of some danger that threatens you or those you love. I have here a chain for the casket, and you must wear it always around your neck.'

"Lizette's heart was so full of gratitude that she knew not what to say; but her feelings shone in her

beautiful eyes, and the good fairy understood her just as well as if she had spoken in the most eloquent manner. 'I will wear it next my heart,' said the young girl when she had found her voice, 'and I shall remember your great kindness always. I do not know what I have done to deserve it.'

"'Do you remember a time when you found a butterfly caught in a spider's web? I'm sure you do, for it was not so very long ago. The spider was a very large and fierce one, and he would have made short work of the poor butterfly, entangled as it was in the strong web. You remember, too, how carefully you released the butterfly, and how tenderly you handled the poor thing when once it was free from the web. You will be surprised to learn that there was no butterfly in the web, and no spider to devour her. What seemed to be a butterfly was no other than myself, and the spider was an unfriendly fairy, who lives under another queen, and who, for some reason or other, has taken a strong dislike to the fairies who inhabit this wood.

"'You will think it strange that a fairy who can change her shape at will should remain a butterfly

when caught in a spider's web. But the most gifted fairy cannot change her shape when she is brought in contact with things that perish. You tried to kill the spider; and it would have been a good thing for both of us if you had succeeded; but, at any rate, you rescued me, and, since you have stood the required test, I think you have nothing to fear from the ugly-tempered fairy who took the shape of a spider to destroy me.

"'You will have trials, and you will be alarmed, but you must remember all the time that nothing but unselfishness and innocence will preserve you. I do not say that you will get everything you desire, because that would be impossible if you become proud or vain or ambitious, but if you continue to be good and charitable and modest you will have what is best for you in this world.'

"'I am sure,' said Lizette, with tears in her eyes, 'that I already have more than I deserve, since I have your friendship. I ask nothing more than to be as I have been, and to continue to deserve the good opinion of my friends and the Little People to whom you belong.'

"The good fairy made no reply to this, but rose from the ground, her garments shining with all the colours of the rainbow, and her hair shining like the rays of the harvest moon. 'Remember the crystal bell,' she said as she floated upward, and her voice sounded like a strain of beautiful music heard from afar. 'Heed its warnings; but when it strikes as the chimes do, remember that good luck is waiting in the road for you.'

"The beautiful fairy rose higher in the air, and began to wave the corners of her rich mantle, and in a moment her shape had changed to that of the butterfly that had led Lizette to the old woman in the forest, and the corners of the mantle were the butterfly's wings. She floated downward again, and, circling playfully around the young girl's head, touched her lightly on the cheek with her brilliant wings, and Lizette knew that it was intended for a caress.

"Circling higher and higher the fairy disappeared in the forest, and Lizette standing in the path, and looking after her benefactor, felt that she had been dreaming. Indeed, she would have been certain

it was all a dream, but for the fact that she could feel the casket in her bosom.

"And yet, while she was talking to the fairy, everything that happened seemed to be perfectly natural. She was somewhat surprised, of course, but no more so than she had often been at the various happenings in the everyday world around her. But, now that it was all over, and she had time to reflect over it, her astonishment knew no bounds. She wondered, too, if she had thanked the good fairy in the proper manner, and then she remembered that the words she wanted to say had refused to come at her bidding, and she thought, with a feeling of shame, that the fairy, who had been so kind, must look upon her as very stupid.

"In spite of this feeling, however, she went home feeling very happy. She ran part of the way, so eager was she to tell her father and mother of her good fortune. Lizette's story was hard to believe, but then the old people had heard of fairies all their lives. More than that, it was easier to believe things in those days than it is now. Nevertheless, the father and mother sat by the hearth that night a long time after their daughter had gone to bed, and wondered,

The beautiful fairy rose higher in the air, and began to wave the corners of her rich mantle, and in a moment her shape had changed to that of the butterfly that had led Lizette to the old woman in the forest.

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as parents will, whether the vision their child had seen was not an evil spirit. Even the best-educated people had some decided views about evil spirits in those days, and among those who were ignorant such ideas were as real as any belief they had. Lizette's father was seriously inclined to take the casket, bell, and all, and bury it deep in the ground, so that the spell, if it was a spell, could do their daughter no harm. But the mother, more practical in her views, refused to listen to this. She argued that if the vision Lizette had seen was an evil spirit, it would be useless to try to escape the charm that had been laid on her, while, on the other hand, if Lizette had really seen a good fairy, it could not help matters to bury her gift.

"Nothing of all this talk was told to their daughter, and the young girl never knew how near she was to losing the precious gift of the fairy. She dreamed the most beautiful dreams while she was sleeping, but when she awoke, she heard the crystal bell sounding a warning. She threw on her clothes in a hurry, and all the while she was dressing, the bell continued to strike. Just as she was ready to help her mother with breakfast, she heard a loud knocking at their

humble door, and when the door was opened, she heard the voice of an old woman asking her mother if she had a daughter. Peeping through a crack in her own door, Lizette saw the old woman, and she was as ugly a hag as one would wish to see in a day's journey. Her face held a thousand wrinkles, her skin was yellow, and two of her teeth protruded from her upper lip like the tusks of some wild animal.

"'Where, then, is this daughter of yours?' the old crone asked harshly.

"'She is at hand when those who have the right desire to see her,' replied Lizette's mother. 'I will answer for her, and you may speak to me.'

"'She will be spoken to by those who have something more than the right,' replied the old woman, with a cackling laugh. 'Our good Prince Palermon, who was riding through the forest yesterday, lost a casket which had been given to him by his mother. Search has been made far and wide, and it is still going on. It is now supposed that someone, in passing through the forest, has found it, and, not knowing the value, has concluded to keep it as a curiosity. By chance, I saw your daughter walking in the forest

yesterday, and have an idea that she has the casket. If she will give it to me, it will be returned to the Prince, and she may get a reward, but if not, nothing will be said about it. If she has hidden it, or if she tries to keep it——' Here the old crone made a horrible grimace, and made a motion as if the affair would be a hanging matter.

"The husband and father had already gone to his work in the fields, and the mother knew not what to do. She had no idea that her daughter had told her a falsehood about the casket; and yet, how did this old woman know about it? Being a simple-minded woman, she was quite puzzled as to the wisest course to take; but she remembered that her daughter had got along very well without the casket all the days of her life, and so she said to the old crone:

"'My daughter has the casket, and when the Prince comes, or someone who represents him, it shall be returned to him. You may tell him this for me.'

"'And do you suppose that the illustrious Prince will condescend to come to this hovel, or lower himself to send for what belongs to him? If you do, you are mightily mistaken. The casket will be sent for, be

sure of that—but I shouldn't like to be caught in this house when the messenger comes.' The old crone cackled as she said this, and was for going away, but Lizette's mother, now thoroughly frightened, told her to wait a moment, and she would get the casket. 'Aha!' cried the hag; 'you are coming to your senses, I see! And it is very well for you and your daughter that you are. It will save you much trouble now and in the days to come.'

"Now, while her mother was talking to this old crone, Lizette was standing at the door of her room listening, and all the time she was listening the crystal bell was sounding its warning. The young girl felt that the old hag would frighten her mother, and that she would have to surrender the casket if she remained in the house, and so, while the bell was rapping out its warning notes, she slipped through the window of her room, and fled into the fields, and as soon as she got out of sight of the house the bell ceased to sound the alarm.

"Thus it happened that when Lizette's mother went to fetch the casket, she found her daughter gone. She was much troubled at this, for the child had not

eaten her breakfast. The mother searched in the blankets for the casket, but it was not to be found, and she was compelled to tell the old woman that Lizette had gone out, but would probably return in a short time.

"'Gone out, is she? I thought as much. Well, the casket will be called for, mark that! And the girl will be called for also—and you will do well to mark that, too.'

"She went away laughing like a hen cackling, and left the poor woman thoroughly frightened. And yet, somehow, she had a feeling of relief. If Lizette had been in the house she would undoubtedly have compelled her to surrender the casket. When the mother grew calmer, she felt convinced that the old hag had tried to deceive her, for she had never known her daughter to tell a falsehood.

"She waited for her daughter to return, and she also had some expectation that the Prince would send for the casket; but she soon forgot all about the Prince when Lizette continued to absent herself, something that she had never been known to do until after she had attended to all her household duties. Now she

was gone, and nothing had been attended to—she had not even eaten her breakfast. The good mother fretted and worried a good deal as the morning passed with no sign of Lizette. She went to the field where her husband was working, and told him of all the happenings of the morning. The poor man could only shake his head and push his spade deeper into the ground; he could do nothing; he was helpless. He felt naturally that if he had been allowed to have his own way—if he had been permitted to bury the casket deep out of sight—they would have had no trouble with it. He felt so and said so; and this view of the matter seemed so reasonable that the good wife began to cry, feeling that everything that had occurred had been her fault. The poor woman cried all the way home, and only dried her eyes when she came near the house, feeling that it would not mend matters for Lizette to see her in tears if she had by any chance returned.

"But Lizette had not returned, and the mother now became thoroughly frightened. It seemed to her that the house was lonelier than ever, and she had known it to be very lonely sometimes. But with her

child gone, and with all the dread created by uncertainty hanging about her, the place no longer felt like home, and she gave way to her tears again. Nevertheless, there was work to be done,—cooking, washing, scrubbing,—but she set about it with a heavy heart.

"As for Lizette, she had been led away from the house by her desire to preserve the crystal bell. She went into the forest, where she remained until she thought the old woman had gone away, but when she started back home, the bell began to warn her with its tinkling strokes, and she felt justified in obeying the warning. So she continued to ramble about at random in the forest. She came to a path, and would have crossed it, but the bell warned her, and it continued until she went along the path in a direction that led her away from her home.

"In rambling about in the forest she had avoided this path, for she knew that it led to the King's highway, which at certain seasons of the year was filled with travellers, some in coaches, some in carriages, and some on horseback. It was the season for the great annual fête at the King's capital, and, at such

times, Lizette's mother had often warned her not to go in sight of the highway. The good woman knew that her daughter was very beautiful, and she wanted to keep her out of sight of the reckless and irresponsible persons who might chance to be going to or coming from the capital of the kingdom.

"The warnings of her mother had been sufficient to keep Lizette away from the highway, and she had confined her rambles to that part of the forest where strangers never came. But now the crystal bell was leading her to disobey the instructions of both her mother and father, but she thought she had a very good reason for it, and she followed as the bell led. When she came in sight of the King's highway, a company of troopers was passing, and they made a brave show, with their shining armour, their glittering halberds, and their fiery horses. Following this troop was a troop of foot soldiers, with their fifes and drums and flying flags.

"Lizette gazed at the great array with delight. She had never seen anything so fine, and she was ready to clap her hands because of the brave show the soldiers made. She would have gone closer, but the

The soldiers passing.

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crystal bell tinkled out its warning, and she remained where she was. But presently the highway was clear, and as she went forward the bell was silent. The road ran between two hedges that had been planted along its entire length by order of the old King, who had been dead many years—so many that his grandson, who reigned in his stead, was now an old man with a son of his own, who was called the Prince. Lizette had often heard how handsome and good this young Prince was. He was so different from many other princes that his good deeds and his kindness were talked of everywhere.

"There was an opening in the hedge near where Lizette stood, and she went through and stood in the road, looking at the gay cavalcade of soldiers that was just disappearing in the distance. She was so much interested in this that she failed to see a great coach that was coming along the road behind her. The crystal bell warned her in time to get out of the way, and then it began to ring out a beautiful chime. The coachman was for driving on by, but a grand lady who sat in the coach gave him a command to stop, and he drew up his fine horses instantly.

as if to embrace her. Lizette eluded her, and turned to those in the coach with an air of entreaty, for she recognised in the old woman the same old hag who had come after the casket, claiming that the Prince had lost it in the forest. Strange to say, however, the crystal bell sounded no note of warning. It was quite silent, save when the golden hammer rung out the musical chimes. For this reason she was no longer afraid of the old woman. She had an idea, indeed, that this old hag was no other than the evil-minded fairy whom she had been warned against.

"'You see how my daughter treats me!' cried the old crone; 'but you must excuse her, Your Honours. When she gets hungry, she is quite another creature. She is ashamed of me before company, but she is not ashamed of me when she wants food.'

"'You are not my mother,' said Lizette, blushing; 'but if you were I would not be ashamed of you. I never saw you until this morning, and then you were trying to rob me.'

"'Rob you! your own mother rob you!'

"'Not my mother, but you, Dame Spider.' When the old crone heard this name she flung her arms above

her head, gave a cry, and darted into the wood. Lizette had no idea that this name would have such an effect on the old woman, but she remembered what she had heard of the spider that had tried to catch the good fairy, and she called the old woman Dame Spider to let her know—if she was the wicked fairy—that she was suspected.

"The little girl laughed to see the ugly old woman run away so quickly. 'She doesn't like the name,' said the gentleman. 'If she's your mother, it's a pity.'

"'But she is not my mother,' Lizette insisted. 'I never saw her but once before in my life. My mother and father live at the farther edge of the forest, and if the lady has time to drive that way, she can see them both. My mother is quite different from the woman you saw here just now.'

"'I should hope so,' said the lady; and then she told Lizette that she would like to take her to the capital, where the court was, and where the King lived, and she promised the young girl that she would be well taken care of.

"Lizette replied that she would be glad to go if

she could get the permission of her father and mother. Those in the carriage consulted a while together, and at last it was decided to send one of the footmen with Lizette. Meanwhile, the lady, the gentleman, and the little girl were to sit in the coach and wait for the footman's return. The gentleman, it was plain, was not pleased with the programme; but he made the best of it, and sat with what patience he could, though he yawned a great deal.

"Now, if the wicked fairy was powerless to do Lizette a bodily injury while she carried the crystal bell in her bosom, she had it in her power to throw a great many unexpected obstacles in the young girl's way, and this she proceeded to do. Lizette, accompanied by the footman, turned into the path by which she had come to the highway, but presently this path became obscure, and it grew fainter and fainter, until finally it disappeared altogether. This was not only puzzling to the young girl—it was distressing. The path had always been plain enough before, and she could not understand why it should fail to be plain now. But she kept on the best she knew how. The footman was very patient and kind,—he wanted

Lizette and the footman on the blind path.

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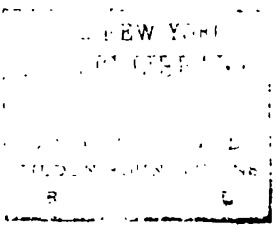

Lizette to give a good report of his conduct if she returned,—but the young girl was completely at a loss as to the direction in which she was going. She knew she had been in this part of the wood many times, though not in the path, but everything seemed strange to her now. Her eagerness to get home added largely to her confusion, and it was not long before she felt that she was lost—lost in a forest that had almost been her home.

"Just as she was about to tell the footman that she was lost, and did not know which way to turn, a large butterfly—the one that she had seen on two occasions before—floated down from the tops of the trees, and circled round her head close to her face. 'Lead me home, pretty butterfly!' she exclaimed; 'lead me home, and that quickly.'

"The footman thought at first that she was speaking to him, but she shook her head when he asked her, and kept her eyes on the butterfly, which now went in a direction nearly opposite to that in which they had been going. Lizette followed it, and the footman followed her, and they went along very rapidly. Once she lost sight of the butterfly, but she

soon found it again. It had been compelled to fly over the tops of the trees to escape a large spider's web that had been flung from tree to tree. At that moment, too, they found the path again, and Lizette ran ahead, the footman following as best he could.

"Lizette was soon at home, and once there her story was quickly told, every part of which was confirmed by the footman. This was not enough for the mother, who insisted on accompanying her daughter to the highway, so she could see the face of the kind lady who had proposed to take her child to the great city and provide for her. The mother quickly got together the modest wardrobe that belonged to Lizette, and insisted on dressing her in her Sunday best. This occupied but a few moments, and then they were ready to return.

"They found the lady and her companions awaiting them very impatiently. The gentleman was in such a hurry that he had descended from the coach, and was pacing slowly up and down, wishing, no doubt, that they had never seen the peasant girl. Still, he was a kind-hearted gentleman, and he was

rather glad on the whole that the young girl had returned. The lady, without telling her name, spoke very kindly to Lizette's mother, and told her how the beauty of the child had attracted her, and how she proposed to take charge of her and provide for her until she had become of age. Though the poor peasant woman loved her daughter dearly, and though she knew that she would lie awake and weep over her absence for many a long night, she raised no objection to the lady's wishes. On the contrary, she declared that she looked on the lady's offer as the greatest honour that ever had or ever could come to them.

" ' Be not too sure of that,' said the lady, ' for your daughter has modesty as well as beauty, and if she is also generous and kind-hearted, nothing will stand in the way of her advancement.'

" The mother could not find words to express her thanks, and so she turned away, after kissing her daughter good-bye, and went out of sight without looking back, for she was afraid Lisette would see her weeping.

" Now, this great lady was not altogether unselfish

in what she proposed to do. She was one of the ladies of the court, and her husband, the gentleman who was in the coach with her, was one of the King's chief advisers. The lady was ambitious not only for herself, but for her husband. She knew that the King would soon be compelled to surrender the government to his son the Prince, and she wanted her husband and herself to stand well with the Prince when he became King. It happened that the young Prince, who had just come of age, had publicly declared his purpose to marry the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, without regard to rank or station. The only conditions he attached to the decree was that the woman of his choice should be modest, gentle, generous, and good, as well as beautiful.

"Those who were attached to the court thought that it would be well for the young Prince to marry a princess of one of the neighbouring kingdoms, so that the power and influence of his own country might be strengthened, and they were very much disturbed over the announcement that the heir to the throne had made. They were inclined to regard it as evidence that he would make an eccentric ruler when he became

King. But there were others who thought that it showed an independent mind, and a desire to make himself popular with his own people.

"Nevertheless, those who were close to the court were in the habit of trying to please those who were above them, and some of these set their wits to work to please the Prince in the matter, in the hope that they might advance their own interests. Among these was the lady who had induced Lizette to accompany her to court. This lady had a great advantage over the other ladies of the court. She had humoured the Prince when he was a mere boy, and she had given him good advice in many ways. His own mother, who had been the Queen, was dead, and this lady had been very kind to him when he stood much in need of sympathy.

"When the young Prince made his announcement, the lady urged her husband to visit his estate in the country, in the hope that the journey would enable her to discover a young girl who was beautiful enough to catch the eye of the Prince. Her journey had been in vain up to the moment when she saw Lizette standing by the roadside, and it needed but a glance for

her to see that this girl was the one she had been searching for.

"Once at the capital, and in her own home, she lost no time in preparing a suitable wardrobe for Lizette. She had sent to her a great many fine dresses, and she observed with pleasure that the young girl chose the simplest. And even while Lizette was choosing, and was prepared to be very happy, she thought of the poverty of her mother and father, and sighed. She made no secret of her thoughts, and the lady told her that in a few months, perhaps, she would be able to give her parents everything they wanted and more.

"The young Prince finally set the day when he was to make his choice, and, to the surprise of all, he named a new condition. The young girl who was to be his bride was to be not only beautiful, gentle, generous, and good, but she was to bring as her wedding dowry a trinket, or piece of jewelry, or some article of value which could not be matched in the kingdom. Of course there was great consternation among those whose friends or daughters had proposed to enter the contest. Some of the would-be brides withdrew in a huff, while others besieged the jewellers with orders

to make them some kind of an ornament which should have no pattern or fellow in the kingdom. The result was quite curious, for when the day came for the Prince to make his selection of a bride, the room in the palace which had been set apart for those who were ambitious to become princesses had the appearance of a museum full of queer relics.

"Now, the lady who had Lizette in charge had very wisely refrained from telling her about the declaration of the Prince, for she knew that the young girl's modesty would take alarm. But the Prince was a frequent visitor at the lady's house, and she contrived it so that the two young people should see each other. Indeed, she gave them frequent opportunities to converse together. Not knowing that the young man was the Prince, Lizette talked with him very freely, and he with her. He inquired if she intended to enter into the contest with the beauties of the kingdom in response to the invitation of the Prince.

"'Why, no,' she replied. 'I am nothing but a poor peasant girl, and my parents have as much as they can do to earn an honest living. The Prince wouldn't look at such as I.'

" He then tried to explain that, under the terms of the contest, a peasant girl would have as good a chance as any, if only she could fulfil the conditions. But Lizette only laughed, declaring that she would feel so much out of place among the beautiful girls of the kingdom that she would feel like sinking through the floor.

" ' But,' the young man insisted, ' if the Prince were wise he would choose you in preference to all the rest.'

" The lady had overheard this conversation, and her heart was filled with joy, especially when Lizette asked her some time afterwards if she thought the Prince was wise. The reply of the lady was that the Prince was as wise as the young man who sometimes came to see them. This reply caused Lizette to blush, though it failed to put any foolish ideas in her head.

" When the day came for the Prince to make choice of his bride, the largest room in the palace was filled with young ladies from all parts of the kingdom, and some of them were very beautiful. Lizette was there also, but the lady had given her to understand that she was to be present merely as a spectator. When everything was ready, the young man who sometimes

The room full of trinkets.

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visited the lady with whom Lizette lived, came into the room and looked around. All the young girls, with the exception of Lizette, bowed very low, making curtsies that were deemed a part of the court etiquette. Lizette, having no idea that this was the Prince, merely nodded as to an old acquaintance. This created some comment, and as her beauty shone out more brightly than all the rest, the comment was somewhat ill-natured. In the view of some she was an 'impudent minx,' while others whispered that she was 'ill-bred and impolite.' As Lizette heard none of these remarks, she regarded the scene with great composure, wondering when the Prince would make his appearance. A small throne had been placed at one end of the room, and ushers and servants in fine uniforms stood at its rear, and were lined up on each side.

"Suddenly, while Lizette was admiring the scene, and wondering where so many beautiful girls had come from, an usher came to her. 'The Prince,' he said, 'would be pleased to speak with you.' He led the way toward the throne, and she beheld seated there the young man with whom she had a slight acquaintance.

"'I am the Prince,' he said; 'will you seat yourself beside me?'

"'Your Royal Highness, I——' The poor girl was so astonished that she could hardly speak, and, in fact, she knew not what to say.

"The Prince rose, seeing her embarrassment, and took her by the hand. She would have knelt before him, but he would not permit it. 'There are two seats, Lizette,' he said. 'One is for me, and the other, if you will take it, is for you.' While he was speaking the crystal bell was ringing a joyful chime. He heard it and paused to listen, charmed with the sweet melody. Trembling, she stepped forward to take the seat, then paused, and turned to the Prince. 'Have you forgotten, Your Highness, that I am but a poor peasant girl? My father burns charcoal, and my mother gathers faggots.'

"Instead of answering her he led her to the seat, and as she took it he was well repaid by the look she gave him. Her eyes, swimming in happy tears, were full of gratitude. 'I heard music just now, and I hear it again,' said the Prince. 'Can you by any chance tell me where it is and what it is?'

"For answer, she took the casket containing the crystal bell from her bosom, and placed it in his hand. It chimed forth a sweet melody louder than ever. And all the great company were enchanted by the music so wonderfully produced.

"Well," said the man in the box or cage, "that is the end of my story. Lizette was married to the Prince, and in due time became the Queen, and her parents were well cared for. The young Prince, who afterward became King, would have bestowed riches on them, but they insisted that all they desired was to be comfortable. Now that their daughter was happy, they had no other aim in life than to live contented on their farm.

"One of the features of the wedding, which was celebrated with great magnificence, was a large and beautiful butterfly which hovered over the bride during the ceremony, and alighted on her shoulder afterwards, and sat there fanning her face with its wings, which shone as if they were studded with jewels. One of the scholars at the court—he was an entomologist, a man who collects bugs and insects—wanted to catch the butterfly and add it to his collection, but the Prin-

cess protested so earnestly that the Prince threatened to banish him from the court if he so much as looked at the butterfly. As you may guess, the butterfly was no other than the good fairy who had brought all this good fortune to Lizette."

"That is the kind of a story I like," said Sweetest Susan. "Fair to middling," remarked Wally Wanderoon, "but a trifle long for the matter that is in it. How do you like it?" he inquired, turning to Drusilla, who was beginning to look sleepy.

"Who—me? Well, dey's lot's too much princin' an' kingin' fer me; an' dem ar butterflies—dey may er been dar, but ef dey is, I don't want none un um skeetin' roun' me."

"It's a story for girls," said Buster John, "and it does pretty well."

"There was a young Prince in it," suggested Sweetest Susan.

Buster John made no further criticism, and Wally Wanderoon seemed to be reflecting. "I caught that chap and put him in there because I was told he was a great teller of stories; but he doesn't seem to be

doing as well as his friends thought he would. He is getting long-winded, and I have no doubt he needs exercise, or something of that kind. It may be that I am getting too old to appreciate that sort of thing, but I hope not. I have seen the day when I could tell a story myself. I don't mean by that that I could sit down and work it up in my mind. I am so constituted that, in order to tell a good story, I must have facts to go on—not ordinary facts, but the truth as it appears to those who know something about it."

"Then tell us one of that kind," said Buster John.

"I am afraid you would think I was drawing the long bow—stretching the blanket—chewing the red rag—or something of that kind. To look at me now you wouldn't think I was once young and sweet, would you? And yet, that is the rumour I heard from those who could remember about it. They are all dead now, but they were not dead when they handed the rumour down to me. One of them was my mother, and she said that if I had had my picture taken, and someone had held it to the light, sweetness would have oozed out of it just as naturally as rosin out of a pine."

VI

THE RED FLANNEL NIGHT-CAP

"WELL, when I was about as large as Buster John here, and still as sweet as ever, so far as I know, I went to visit my godmother. She belonged to a roving band of gipsies, and she and her companions happened to be camping near my father's house when I was born. Nobody asked her to be my godmother; she simply walked into the room, and announced that she proposed to take on herself the duties of such a position, and before anybody could say a word, she touched me on the forehead three times, turned around twice, sat down in the middle of the floor, and made some marks on the planks with her thumbnail, using her left hand, and there she was—having made herself my godmother before a fish could bat its eye. That done, she made a low bow to the small company there assembled, and went her way. The next morning, when my mother sent out to discover the name of the person

who had made herself my godmother so unceremoniously, she and her companions had moved on. Not a sign of them was left, except the ashes of the fire that they had lit in their camp.

"This was a fine beginning, you will say, and perhaps you would be right about it. I don't remember what I thought at the time, but as the report is that I began to cry as soon as the gipsy-woman left the house, and kept it up for some time, the probability is that I was somewhat angry at the way I had been treated. That is why I say that people should be very careful about the feelings of children. I have no doubt that grief at that time has something to do with my growth. If I had been consulted, I think I would have been several feet taller."

"What were you grieving about?" inquired Sweetest Susan, who was always ready to show her sympathy.

"That is the trouble," replied Wally Wanderoon. "I don't remember; if I did, no doubt my mind would be easier on the subject. In your way through the world, you should always take time to sympathise with those who have secret troubles. Mine are so small

that I don't mind telling you about them, as you have seen.

"Well, as I was growing up, my mother used often to tell me about my mysterious godmother, and she always left the impression on my mind that we had not heard the last of her; and the idea seemed to be that, in some way, this godmother, whose name no one knew, would finally make my fortune. This was what my mother thought, and she soon brought me to the same way of thinking. There was nothing strange about this; nearly everybody has an imaginary ship that is always to come into port, bringing a fortune, and yet it always founders in the sea.

"As for me, I had some very long thoughts, as children will have, but I waited for my ship the same as other people. One day, when I was about the size of Buster John, not as tall, perhaps, but stouter, a dark-looking stranger came to our house, and asked for my mother. She presented herself as soon as she could,—she had to primp a little, knowing that a stranger had called,—and she was soon given to understand that my godmother was in the neighbourhood, and had a strong desire to see me. Naturally,

A dark stranger came to our door.

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my mother thought that all her dreams had come true, and so did I as soon as I heard the nature of the message.

"I was keen to go, and my mother was as eager as I was; and yet, she hesitated. She wondered why the godmother hadn't come herself, as she did the first time, instead of sending. The reason was plain to me, for if she had sent for me the night that I was born, I should have had some trouble in putting on my clothes and finding my way to the camp and back again, for at that time, you must remember, I was quite a stranger in those parts. I knew nothing of the big oak tree that grew at the corner of the house, and I had not even seen the jaybirds that built their nests in its boughs every summer. In fact, I was about as ignorant as anyone could possibly be.

"Well, you know how it is—my mother wanted me to go, and she didn't. She thought maybe my godmother had fortune, or, at the very least, a fine present, for me, and then she was afraid I wouldn't come back. As for me, I wanted to go. After a boy becomes twelve years of age, he is ready to take almost any

chance that presents itself, and therefore I begged and pleaded with my mother to let me go. While she hesitated, the messenger who had come from the gipsies—a tall, wild-eyed looking fellow—stood and gazed on us with a peculiar smile on his face. Finally he grew impatient, and so he says, in a careless sort of way, 'What shall I tell my mistress?' 'Why——' says my mother, and there she stopped. Seeing her hesitate, I ran and caught the man by the hand and pulled him along. 'Come,' said I, 'she's willing,' and away we went through the woods, the man walking fast to make up for lost time, and I running hard at his heels.

"We presently came to the camp, which was pitched in the midst of a great wood, and there I saw my godmother waiting for me with small show of patience.

"'Oh, and you've come, have you?' she growled. 'I would have waited the day out, if I were you. A pretty way to treat your godmother, and the only one you've got.'

"'Why, as to that,' says I, 'having never seen you before, I have never felt the need of you; but I

would have been here before now, but for the fears of my mother.'

"'Oh!' she cried; 'mammy was afraid her pretty darling would come to some harm,' she sneered.

"'She had her doubts about it,' I replied; 'but as for me, I had none. Ask your messenger.'

"'You are a quick-spoken lad,' she declared, 'but that was to be expected, with such a godmother as you have.' She certainly seemed to know her own merits, and made no attempt to hide her knowledge.

"She was not what I should call a handsome woman," Wally Wanderoon went on, "but she had her good points. For one thing she had long black hair that fell away from her head in great waves, and her eyes were as bright as those of a mink—and as black. I rather liked her looks myself. There was nothing of the old crone about her. When she smiled she showed as pretty a set of teeth as this rubber doll of yours."

"Huh! ef you think I'm a rubber doll youer mighty much mistaken," said Drusilla with a show of indignation. "I'm bigger'n you is an' wider, too."

"Oh, you'll do pretty well," remarked Wally Wanderoon complacently; "you'll do very well indeed.

I wish you had been with me at the time I am speaking of. That was—let me see, let me see—yes, that was three—no—four hundred years ago the way you count time. The way I count it, it was only four years ago."

"Four hundred years ago!" exclaimed Buster John; "why this country wasn't discovered then."

"I may be mistaken," replied Wally Wanderoon, "but I don't think I said anything about this country. In fact, the story I'm telling has nothing whatever to do with this country."

"Oh!" Buster John cried apologetically.

"Let me see—I was talking about my godmother. As I was saying, she was a tolerably good-looking woman. I was surprised at this, for I had an idea that godmothers must, in the nature of things, be old and somewhat shaky. I said as much to the woman, and she seemed pleased, for she smiled and showed her pretty white teeth.

"'I have several gifts for you,' she said, 'and it remains to be seen whether you will appreciate them.' She came to me where I stood, and placed her hand on my head, and began something like this—

"'It's the natural right of every man
To get rich if he must, or poor if he can.'

"I leave you to judge whether, at my age, I could understand the meaning of this. I don't know that I understand it any better now; but I remember every word she said, and this was the way she began when she placed her hand on my head. Then she went on:

"'Your eyes shall see in the night,
Your feet shall be swift in flight;
Your arms and your legs shall be strong,
And the years that you live shall be long.'

"As you may well believe, these presents, or promises, made me feel very comfortable. I straightened myself up and tried to look taller than I really was. Then my godmother began to speak again. She held in her hand what I took to be a piece of red flannel, but when she unfolded it I saw that it was a red flannel night-cap, such as I had seen my great-grandmother wear.

"'Take this,' she said, 'and guard it carefully. When you wear it at night you will have pleasant dreams, and in these dreams you will be able to fore-

see danger, and you will be able to foretell coming events. This foresight and foreknowledge will enable you to tell fortunes and to predict coming events.'

"I wish," said Drusilla suddenly, "dat I know'd when I wuz gwine ter git dinner."

"Will you hush!" cried Buster John. "Why, you'd spoil any story in the world."

"She doesn't bother me," said Wally Wanderoon; "no, not a bit more than that child there." He pointed to Billy Biscuit, who was fast asleep. After rubbing his nose Wally Wanderoon resumed his story.

"My godmother, after telling me about the night-cap, as I have told you, went on to say that with it on my head in the daytime I would know who my friends were, and who my enemies, and that it would be of great benefit to me in many ways which I would find out for myself. In short, it was the most wonderful piece of flannel cloth that had ever been cut from a loom—or would have been if it had been woven, for when I came to examine it, I found that it had been knit, but its texture was just as fine and as close as a piece of cloth made on a loom. The only way I could

tell it was knit was because it was all in one piece. If it had been cloth, you know, it would have had a seam in it somewhere.

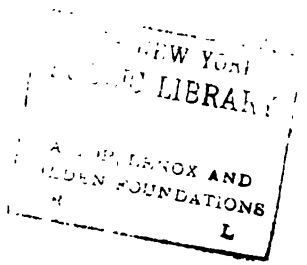
"Well, my godmother gave me the nightcap and a great deal of good advice which I have forgotten, and then she bade me good-bye. I hesitated about going, for I was afraid I couldn't find my way out of the forest, and I had hopes that she would send the messenger with me. She saw what the trouble was, and simply remarked that whenever I was in doubt about anything, I must put on the night-cap. This I hastened to do when out of sight of the gipsy camp, and then a very strange thing happened. By the time I had put the cap on, I could see my mother standing in the door looking in my direction to see if I was coming. She shaded her eyes with her hand and peered into the forest, and her features were as plain to me as if I had been standing by her side, and I could see she was worried.

"Now, you may not believe me, but by the time I had adjusted my hat over the cap, so as to hide it, I was standing in the yard, though as it seemed to me I hadn't moved out of my tracks. My return was

a great relief to my mother, who had no confidence in the gipsies, any more than the common run of people have to-day. She heard with surprise what I had to tell her, and insisted on trying on the night-cap, but, somehow or other, she couldn't make it fit. No matter how careful she was, there was always something wrong about it; it would be wrong side outwards, or hind side before, or it would fall out of her hands in spite of all she could do; and finally she gave it up, saying that she must be getting old. But I found out afterwards that the cap would fit only me and one other—my enemy. I hadn't met him at that time, and therefore I didn't know him.

"But I came to know him after a while, and I came to know a great many other people, some good and some bad. I hardly know how to tell you all about the red flannel night-cap. I had so many adventures with it, some queer, and some ridiculous, that it would take me two or three days to tell them. The fact is, I can't remember everything that happened; I only know that from the time the night-cap came into my possession, I began to find myself busy with adventures. They followed on one another's heels so

The moon settling down.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fast that there were days when I was sorry I had the night-cap, and if I could have seen my godmother, I should have returned it to her."

Wally Wanderoon paused and looked up at the sky —if it could be called a sky—and seemed to be reflecting. Following the direction of his eyes, Drusilla looked up, and gave an exclamation of surprise. The sky was of a deep copper colour, and the markings overhead were like those she had always observed on the moon, only they were a thousand times larger. 'Name er goodness!' she exclaimed; 'I b'lieve de moon is settlin' down on us!'

"Well, why not?" inquired Wally Wanderoon. "We are obliged to have some kind of an umbrella, and the moon is as good as anything else."

"Dat may do fer dem what usen ter dat sort er umbrell, but me— I b'lieve I'd a heap ruther git wet."

"You'll keep on talking your foolish talk," said Buster John scornfully, "until you'll get us into trouble, and then who will get us out? Aaron isn't here, and if you can find Mr. Thimblefinger, you'd do me a favour."

"I can't fin' 'im; I dunner wharbouts ter look," said Drusilla sadly.

"Then hold your tongue!" Buster John commanded.

If Wally Wanderoon heard this conversation, he paid no attention to it. He kept on looking at the sky, and rubbing his chin. Finally he turned to the children. "I was trying to think," he said, "what to tell you first, and I have decided that my adventures with my enemy will amuse you, for in spite of all I could do, they turned out to be about as ridiculous as anything of the kind I ever heard of, though they seemed to be serious enough at the time. I could tell you a hundred tales about that red flannel night-cap, and I may tell you fifty or sixty now, but the rest will have to be postponed until some other time. But the fifty or sixty that I propose to tell——"

"'Fo' dinner?" inquired Drusilla with a frown.

"I can tell you better about that if you would show me the dinner," replied Wally Wanderoon, lifting his eyebrows higher than ever and looking at Drusilla with a comical smile.

"Humph! I wish I could show it ter you; I bet

you wouldn't mor'n git a glimp un it 'fo' I'd gobble it up. Go on an' tell de tales den; I kin stan' um ef dese chillun, an' dat baby dar, kin."

"Well," said Wally Wanderoon, "the name of this tale might well be 'Satan's Snuff-Box,' but I shall not call it that. After you have heard it, you may call it what you please. Shortly after my godmother gave me the red flannel night-cap, my mother wanted me to go to the village for some article which she needed about the house, and so I mounted my donkey and started off, hoping that I would have an opportunity to try the virtue of my godmother's gift. If it did nothing else, it gave me confidence in myself. I was not afraid now to go to the village, and, in fact, I would not have been afraid to go to the largest city in the world. It was a curious change, too, for previous to that I had been very shy of strangers. One reason was my short stature; I knew very well that those who were more fortunate in the size and shape of their figure, were inclined to make sport of me for an affliction—if you can call it so—that I couldn't help; and the thought of it gave me great pain, and caused me to wish many and many a time

that I might never see a human face—I mean the face of a stranger.

"But, somehow or other, I had suddenly lost that feeling, and so, when my mother asked me if I was afraid to go to town for her, I answered very bravely that I would be glad to go. So I saddled my donkey, and went along the road whistling a merry tune, for I felt happy. I wore the red flannel night-cap under my cloth hat, and kept my eye out for some adventure worthy of a brave lad.

"Suddenly, in the far distance, by the side of the road that led over a steep hill, I saw a carriage. It was standing still, and I judged that the heavy mud, occasioned by the rain that had been falling for many days, had proved too much for the strength of the two horses. This turned out to be the fact, although the horses were very stout. In the coach sat two ladies, the gentleman who was escorting them being engaged in aiding the driver and the postilion to drag the carriage from the soft mud into which the wheels had sunk to their hubs.

"Without any invitation, I jumped from my donkey, and endeavoured to help them the best I could.

It seemed that my weight against one of the wheels was just sufficient, with the aid of the horses and the other men, to move the coach, and so it was slowly dragged from the mud until the wheels rested on firm ground. The ladies smiled their thanks, and the gentleman, forgetting about the weight of the feather that broke the camel's back, looked at me in astonishment. 'You have stout arms, my little man,' he declared. 'If you grow stronger as you grow older, you will be a successor to Hercules.'

"I paid little attention to him, for while he was talking it seemed to me that I could see the town to which we were all going. More than that, I could see the very carriage that was standing by my side. It drove into the courtyard of an inn, and before the postilion could dismount to unfasten the door, several men rushed from a rear room in the inn, overpowered the gentleman, and made off with the ladies. I saw all this as plainly as I see you children, and I was so taken up with the strange scene, that the gentleman's words sounded as if they came from a long way off. I heard and understood, but still I seemed to be in the inn-yard. It was a very queer

feeling, especially when I came to myself, and found the gentleman's hand on my shoulder.

"I turned to him and said, 'Is there any reason, sir, why certain men should seek to seize the ladies in the coach and do injury to you?'

"'Why—but why do you ask?' If the gentleman had glanced in the direction of the driver, as he spoke to me, he would have had cause for suspicion, for the coachman's face was white, and his knees trembled under him. Being young and unsuspicious then, I had no idea what the trouble was, but I know now that he was in the plot, and the gentleman would have known it too if he had but glanced at the man; but his attention was taken up with me. 'Why do you ask such a strange question?' he repeated.

"'I can only tell you this,' I replied. 'When you reach the inn at which you propose to stop, armed men will rush from one of the rear rooms when your coach has entered the courtyard, seize the ladies, and overpower you. That is as much as I can tell you, because it is as much as I know.'

"He paused and reflected a moment, and then he asked me a hundred questions. Seeing that I could

make no definite reply, he took me aside and questioned me, no doubt thinking that I was too embarrassed to speak before the others. But I could only tell him the plain truth—that I had seemed to see the attack on him and the ladies take place right before my eyes while he was talking to me, and that I felt it to be my duty to tell him about it.

"I could see that he was far from believing in the vision that had appeared to me, but he was more thoughtful; he seemed to reflect over the information I had given him. 'I am much obliged to you for the warning,' he said, as he entered the coach. 'I shall be prepared to give my friends a warm reception when they issue from the inn.' He bade me good-bye very politely, and went on his way. As I was going the same road, I observed that the coachman looked back at me as long as I remained in sight, which was not long, for a pokey old donkey cannot be expected to travel as fast as two fine coach-horses.

"When I came near to the town, another spectacle appeared to me. I could see myself on my donkey, surrounded by several men, one or two of them gentlemen, and the others ruffians of the most approved

pattern. I could not hear what was said, but I could see by the actions of all concerned that the men were charging me with stealing the donkey, while I seemed to be stoutly denying the charge.

"I took this for another warning, and I made the most of it. I turned aside from the road, tied the donkey in a thick growth of shrubbery, and entered the town by a gate nearly opposite to the one that opened on the road by which I had come. Once there, I made haste to procure the article for which I had been sent, and, in a very short time, I was on my way home again.

"The next day there was a knocking at our door, and, as such an event occurred but seldom, you may imagine what a sensation it caused around that humble fireside. I ran to the door to open it, and in the somewhat tattered and battered man who stood there I recognised the person who, the day before, was driving the gentleman's coach. He had been painfully wounded about the head and face, but I had no difficulty in recognising him, for I had closely observed him while the gentleman was talking to me.

"He desired, he said, to hold a conversation with

me, declaring that although I had been the cause of his ruin, he bore me no ill-will. 'What has happened to you?' I asked. Instead of replying briefly, he went into a long narrative of his life. He had been very poor, and when he was a young man he fell in with bad companions, who in the daytime were robbers, and at night burglars. At last he saw an opportunity to secure a place as coachman to the gentleman with whom I had seen him, and he promptly accepted it, and bade adieu to his former companions. He was sensible enough, he said, not to inform them where he was going, and he was in hopes that they would never discover his whereabouts.

"In the course of time, however, they found him out, inveigled him into a plot to abduct the gentleman's wife and sister, so that they might be held for ransom. He felt compelled to enter into their scheme, he said, for he knew that they would expose him to his patron, to whom he was under many obligations. He was to take no part in the attack, but was to stand by, pretending to be afraid while they carried out their plot. Then came the moment when I had informed his master of what was about to occur,

so that when the coach drew up in the courtyard of the inn, the gentleman was prepared for the attack, and, being a cunning swordsman, had run three of them through almost before they knew what was happening, and the others, fearing a like fate for themselves, turned tail and fled.

"But they were not so frightened that they failed to seek the coachman out. They were sure that he had betrayed them, and they went boldly to the servants' apartments at the inn and made inquiries for him. He felt compelled to show himself, and when he followed them into the courtyard, they had seized him and taken him away a prisoner. They beat him most unmercifully, so he said, and were on the point of killing him when he implored them to stay their hands until he could have an opportunity of proving that he had not betrayed them. And now, with that purpose in view, he had come to me for both information and advice.

"The man seemed honest enough; in fact, all the time he was relating his troubles he was weeping as if his heart would break, although he appeared to be too stout a fellow for so many tears. I sympathised

The fight in the tavern yard.

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with him as well as I could, for I had small confidence in his good intentions. If I had had any, it would have disappeared when he proposed that I should go with him to the town, and assure his old companions that he had not betrayed them.

"Well, this struck me as a pretty cool proposition. I had left my red flannel night-cap under my pillow that morning, and so, before accepting or refusing his invitation, I thought it would be well to place it on my head under my hat. I excused myself a moment, and when I came back I knew that the best thing I could do would be to pretend to fall in with his plans, for, looking from under the red flannel night-cap, I could see that the companions of this man were stationed in a wood not far away, and were ready to pounce out and capture me if the fellow could prevail on me to accompany him. I could also see that a party of constables, accompanied by the gentleman who had been attacked in the coach, were setting out from the city, with the intention of capturing these bandits—at least I supposed that such was their intention.

"With the purpose of astonishing the robber, who

had been playing the coachman, I asked him why he told me that his companions were awaiting him in the town, when, in fact, they were concealed in a wood some distance outside of town. His face fell at this, and he quickly asked how I knew that this was so. 'I know it,' said I, 'in the same way that I knew what your fellows would have done if I had entered the town by the south highway yesterday.' 'If you are a conjurer,' he said, edging away, 'I want nothing more to do with you.'

"'I am conjurer enough to know that it is a very good thing for you that you came here, for in the course of half an hour your fellows will be in the hands of the officers of the law. They have already set out from the town, and as your ruffians are only trying to conceal themselves from those who pass along the road in this direction, they will be finely surprised by the posse that is searching for them.'

"'Are you a wizard?' exclaimed the man. 'If you are, I ask ten thousand pardons for disturbing Your Worship.'

"I am afraid that I had a touch of vain pride when the fellow assumed this attitude of humility; and

The rogue changes into a rolling ball.

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vanity will make a fool of anyone. I lost my senses for a moment and became boastful. 'I have something here,' I said, uncovering my head, and exposing the red flannel night-cap, 'that will go farther than all your wizards and your witches.' 'You don't say so, Master!' exclaimed the fellow. 'Why, it is nothing but a red flannel night-cap,' he said, coming closer. Before I could raise my hand or even realise what he had done, he made a spring toward me, and snatched the magic cap from my head. As he did so, he turned and ran, and as he ran he placed the cap on his head.

"The moment he did this he disappeared, and a rolling ball took his place. I followed as fast as I could, but the ball kept rolling faster than I could go. It grew larger as it rolled, and presently it rose in the air, and floated off in the direction of the town. I was so eager to recover the red flannel night-cap that I forgot all about the man's companions, who were waiting for me in the wood. As it floated, the ball followed the turns of the road, and it did not fly through the air so fast that I could not keep in sight of it. When I grew too tired to run farther the

floating ball grew slower in its movements, and appeared to accommodate itself to my weary effort to follow.

"At a certain point in the road, it came closer to the ground, and presently burst with a muffled noise, filling the air with what I took to be smoke, but which I presently discovered was a black powdery stuff such as you see in the round mushrooms that grow in the fields. They are called Satan's snuff-boxes all over the world. When the powdery stuff cleared away, I discovered the fellow who had stolen my red flannel night-cap sitting on the ground sneezing as if he would never stop. Not far away were his companions, and they were in the custody of the officers of the law. The gentleman who had been attacked on the coach was with them. In a moment they had surrounded the fellow who had robbed me, but he paid no attention to them, and made no reply to the questions that were asked him. He could not talk for sneezing.

"'A rope around his neck will cure that,' said the gentleman. Then, seeing me, he thanked me over and over again for the warning I had given him. He

said that if I ever came to the city which was his home, he would be glad to entertain me at his house, and he gave me a handsome reward for the service I had rendered him. In short, everything fell out as finely as events do in the story books."

"But what became of the red flannel night-cap?" inquired Buster John.

"You see what a poor story-teller I am," replied Wally Wanderoon. "Well, when the ball burst, the Red Flannel Night-Cap was flung into the top of a tall pine. While I was searching for it, and doubting if I would ever find it, I heard a crow making a peculiar noise. At first I could not see where he was, but presently he rose in the air with something in his beak, and I immediately recognised my red flannel night-cap. It was almost too heavy for the crow to carry, and he flew lower and lower. I followed him till he lit on a smaller tree, and when he started to fly again I clapped my hands and shouted. This frightened the crow so that he dropped my red flannel night-cap and flew away."

There was a pause, and then Wally Wanderoon

asked the children what they thought of the story. They were not as enthusiastic about it as the droll little man could desire. Drusilla was especially cool, and she was the only one who replied to the question. "It's a tale," she said, with something like a sneer.

"Can you tell a better one?" asked Wally Wanderoon, looking at her with a frown on one side of his face, and a smile on the other.

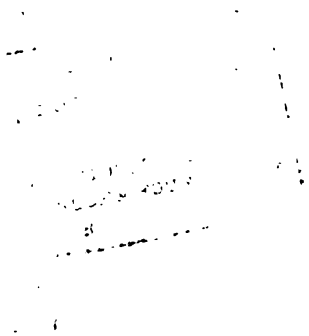
"Not here, not in dis place," she replied. "Not nowheres when I'm hongry."

"Me hongry too," said Billy Biscuit, waking up. "Me want mine dinner wight now."

"Very well," replied Wally Wanderoon. "You shall have it at once. Wake up here, everybody! It is dinner time! We want our dinner! Serve this very instant!"

The children never knew how it happened, but before they could wink their eyes more than three times, there was the dinner smoking hot. It was served on top of the box or cage in which the professional story-teller was confined. Sweetest Susan was hungry, but she was not satisfied to eat while the story-teller was in the box, and she said as much.

The story teller getting close to nature



"Well, get him out if you can find him," said Wally Wanderoon. But when Sweetest Susan tapped gently on the box, and called to the story-teller, she could get no reply. "Go around to the other side, and see if he's there," said Wally Wanderoon. "My opinion is that he has had his dinner, and is now fast asleep on the side of one of these hills. He says he is very much in love with Nature, but when he gets close to her he always goes to sleep."

Sweetest Susan found the box empty, and the thought that the story-teller had had his dinner gave her a better appetite. All of the children were hungry, and they did ample justice to the food which had been set before them, they knew not how, and when they finished they were in a much better humour than before. They were prepared to listen patiently to the dullest story that was ever invented. Wally Wanderoon lost no time in inviting Drusilla to tell a story, and he advised her to tell the best one she could think of.

"Huh!" exclaimed Drusilla, "you sholy don't speck me ter tell no good story in dish yer place whar de hills runs bofe backerds an' forrerds, an' whar you

hatter crawl sideways fer ter keep fum fallin' down hill whichever way you turn."

Drusilla's desire was to tell no story at all, but she finally told one which for many years had been popular with negro girls between the ages of twelve and twenty. It may be called

VII

MISS LIZA AN' DE KING

"I TELL you-all right now," said Drusilla, "I dunner nothin' 'tall 'bout dis tale but de tellin' un it. I dunner whar de folks live at, ner what dey wuz doin' dar, ner whar dey come fum, ner whar dey wuz gwine. In de tale dey's a king, but I dunner wharbouts he wuz a-kingin' it at. Ef you want ter know de name er de country an' what kinder folks dey wuz, you'll hatter choosen a name fer ter suit you, an' figger all de ballance out in yo' own min'."

Having relieved herself of all responsibility in the matter, Drusilla hung her head, and began to twist one corner of her apron. She was dreadfully shy, a fact that did not appear in her somewhat abrupt manner of speaking, nor in her downright way of commenting on what attracted her attention. Finally, seeing that there was no way out of it, she began:

"Well, one time dey wuz a King, an' he wuz a

mighty man. He fit here, an' he fout dar, an' he kep' on doin' dataway, twel bimeby he got tired er strowin' de face er de yeth wid dead folks, an' he tuck de idee dat he better settle down an' see ef he can't do some good in de worl'. I dunner whedder he wuz white er cullud, but he wuz free, an' my daddy say dat when youer free youer des ez good ez anybody else an' a heap better. He aint only free, he wuz de King er dat country, wharsomever 'twuz, des like I tell you; an' he didn't had ter work ef he don't wanter.

"Well, it went on twel he got tired er killin' folks, an' he say ter hisse'f he b'lieve he'll look aroun', an' see ef he can't git a job what dey's mo' fun in dan dey is in fightin'. So he looked aroun', de King did, an' bimeby he axt one er de ol' men 'bout it. De ol' man, he sorter comb his long grey beard wid his finger nails, an' atter while he ax de King ef he yever think 'bout l'arnin' a trade. De King ax him what he mean, an' de ol' man say dat 'cordin' ter his notion, a man, king er no king, can do mo' good by makin' a pair er shoes dan he kin by killin' a man.

"Dis made de King bite his thumb. De ol' man

wuz one er de smartest men in all de whole settlement, an' when dey wuz big things ter talk about, he wuz allers one er de fust ones dey went ter hear. So de King, he stood dar, he did, an' bite his thumb. Atter while, he 'low, 'How long will it take a man fer ter l'arn de shoemakin' trade?' De ol' man—I dunner what his name wuz—he make answer dat a right bright man mought l'arn it in six er sev'm mont's, but he speck it 'll take de King 'bout a year. Den de King wanter know whar de best place fer ter l'arn shoemakin', an' de ol' man, he say dat he got a shop er his own, an' he'll be glad ter show 'im all de ins an' outs er de business.

"But still de King bite his thumb. He 'low, 'Who gwineter do de kingin' whilst I'm makin' shoes?' De ol' man say dat aint nothin', kaze it's a heap harder fer ter make a good pair er shoes dan what it is fer ter do de kingin' when dey's so many ter he'p 'im, an' he say dat it's a mighty slack-wadded man what can't do de kingin' an' l'arn how ter make shoes at de same time. So de King, he 'low dat he'd try his han' one whet ef it killed eve'y cow in de island."

"Killed every cow in the island!" exclaimed

Wally Wanderoon. "What on earth did he mean by that?"

"It's des a sayin'," replied Drusilla. "He mean he gwinter l'arn in spite er anything. Well, de nex' mornin', he got up bright an' early, an' had a soon brekfus, an' whilst he wuz pickin' his toofies, he tol' his folks, and dem what holp him do de kingin', dat he wuz gwineter spen' de day out, an' he wouldn't be home 'fo' night. Den he went in a little outhouse dey had on de place, an' put on a rough suit er cloze, an' put out fer de shop whar de ol' man an' his men made shoes.

"When de King got dar, dey wuz all dar an' peggin' away des ez hard ez dey kin. A young 'oman met 'im at de door, an' she 'low, 'Aint you de new man what my daddy gwineter l'arn how ter make shoes?' De King, he make answer dat he wuz. Wid dat, de gal toss her head, an' say, 'Well, you'll hatter git a quicker lick dan dat. My daddy aint gwineter have no fiddlin' 'roun' an' hangin' back. Dar's yo' bench right over dar in de cornder, whar nobody won't bodder you, an' you won't bodder nobody. De King, he look at de gal an' 'low, 'I b'lieve I'd l'arn twice ez

quick ef I had you fer ter show me '—desso. De gal, she make a low bow "—Drusilla caught hold of her dress and showed how it was done, and her mimicry was so droll and comical that the others laughed heartily—" de gal she make a low bow an' say, 'I thank you mightly, but ef you'll scuzen me I'll be much erbleege!' De King, he look at her an' laugh. He say he dunner whedder he'll scuzen her er not. Wid dat she flirted out, ripe mad, an' bimeby de Daddy come in, lookin' mighty sollum.

" He looked 'roun', he did, an' 'low, so dey all kin hear 'im, 'Some er you-all been sassin' Miss Liza, an' it's got ter stop 'fo' it begins good. Miss Liza is my onliest daughter, an' de nex' time one er you-all sassies her I'm gwinter tell de King, an' I boun' you he'll put a stop ter de whole business. Me an' de King is good frien's, kaze I had a confab wid him no longer'n yistiddy.'

" 'I seed you when you wuz confabbin' wid de King,' de new man say. Now you-all mustn't fergit dat dish yer new man in de shop wuz de King hisse'f," remarked Drusilla confidentially. " De new man say, 'I seed you, an' I 'low'd ter myse'f dat de King aint

so much nicer an' purtier dan what some yuther folks is.'

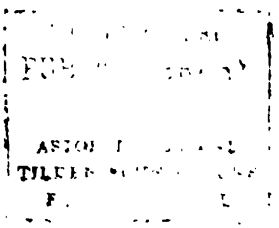
"'Dat's ez may be,' de ol' shoemaker say, 'but ef any er you-all up an' sassy Miss Liza, I'll run right straight an' tell de King.'

"'Ef I wuz in yo' place,' de King say, 'I wouldn't do nothin' er de kin'; I'd des sen' a man atter de King an' tell 'im you wanter see 'im.'

"'Wid dat, de ol' shoemaker went on in de front er de shop whar he had shoes fer ter sell. Miss Liza, she wuz lis'nin' at de door, an' when she hear de new man talkin' so familious like 'bout de King, she say ter herse'f dat whatsomever else he may be skeer'd un, he sholy aint skeer'd er de King; an' de way she put it down wuz dat a man what want skeer'd er de King want skeer'd er nothin'.

"So, 'twan't long 'fo' she make out she had some business in de shop, an' whilst she in dar she look at de new man, an' she aint had ter look but once 'fo' she seed dat he aint know no mo' 'bout makin' shoes dan de man in de moon. She 'low, 'Who l'arnt you how ter make shoes?' He say, 'Yo' daddy say he gwinter l'arn me how, but you see how 'tis—he think

Bobby de Raw and the shoëmaker's daughter.



mos' ez much er de King ez he do er me.' Miss Liza kinder bridle up at dis. She 'low, 'It's a mighty good thing de King can't hear you puttin' yo'se'f up on de same flatform wid him.' 'Maybe dat's so,' de new man say, 'but eve'y word you hear me say 'bout de King, I'll say ter his face; an' mo' dan dat, ef he wuz ter fool wid me, I'd pull his whiskers fer him. I has done it 'fo' now.' Wid dat, he gun his own whiskers a twitch.

"Well, Miss Liza, she fetched a gasp, an' stood dar lookin' at de man. She 'low, 'Does you mean ter set dar flatfooted an' tell me dat you done pull de King's whiskers?' De man make answer, 'Dat's what I said, an' ef you don't b'lieve me, you fetch de King here whar I kin git my hands on him.' Miss Liza cotch her breff ag'in, an' stood dar lookin' at de man. She wuz done struck dumb by de way he talk. Den she happen ter see dat de man han' wuz bleedin', an' she whirl roun' dar, an' fix him up a little flap er leather fer ter fit de pan er his han', an' whilst she wuz 'bout it, she showed him how ter use de awl an' de hammer, an' how ter put de hog bristle in de th'ead, an' how ter make de holes fer de pegs.

" De man wuz a King, but dat aint hender him fum l'arnin' fer ter be a shoemaker—it mought er holp him on. Miss Liza never had l'arnt, an' yit she could set right down an' make a shoe wid de best un um. De new man, which wuz de King, he ax Miss Liza ef she show all de yuthers how ter make shoes. She toss her head an' stick out her chin, an' ax de man ef he aint sorter weak in de head. Den she laugh, an' run out'n de room.

" When dinner time come, all de yuthers stop work, an' tuck der baskets an' went out in de yard, an' set in de sun, an' et der dinners—all cep' de King. Not bein' use ter dem kinder doin's, he had come off widout fetchin' his dinner, an' so he sot der an' hammered on de shoes whilst de yuthers wuz 'joyin' deyse'f. Miss Liza, settin' at de table, hear de hammer gwine, an' she ax her daddy who wuz dat workin' when dey oughter be eatin'. De ol' man, he wag his head an' laugh, an' say it mus' be de new man.

" Miss Liza, she jump up fum de table, an' run an' peep thoo de shop door, an' sho nuff, dar wuz de new man peggin' away at de shoes, an' workin' like some un wuz drivin' 'im. Den she went in. De King hear

de noise she make, but he aint look up. He des went on wid his work like dey want nothin' in de worl' dat smell like dinner. Miss Liza, she say, 'Why, don't you eat yo' dinner wid de rest un um?' De King, he 'low, 'Dey aint none un um ax me.' Den Miss Liza say, 'Whyn't you fetch yo' own dinner?' De King 'low, 'Why, I come off dis mornin' an' clean fergot it.' 'It's a wonder,' Miss Liza say, 'dat you didn't fergit yo' hat.' De King laugh, an' den he 'low, 'Dat des zackly what I went an' done, an' I had ter go way back atter it; dat how come I wuz so late.' He look at her an' she look at him, an' den he laugh, an' dis look like it make her git red in de face.

"She say, 'You got mighty brazen eyes.' He 'low, 'You got mighty purty ones.' She say, 'Don't be impident.' He 'low, 'A hongry man 'll say mos' anything.' Wid dat, she whipt out er de room, an' bimeby here she come back wid a tray full er vittles, an' sot it down by him. He look at her right hard, an' 'low, 'When I git ter be King, I'll make you de Queen.' 'Well, 'taint no mo' dan I speck,' she say, 'kaze a fortune-teller tol' me one day dat ef I'd be good an' quit my behavishness I'd marry high, an'

live well. She say dat my ol' man would be a good pervider, an' gi' me nice cloze ter w'ar. But I tell you right now dat I aint gwineter marry no shoemaker, kaze ever sence I been born I been smellin' leather, an' shoemaker's wax, an' mo' dan dat, I been hearin' dem shoe hammers tell it look like sometimes dey'll run me crazy. No, siree! no shoemaker fer me!'

"De King, he et his dinner slow, an' smack his mouf. He 'low dat he aint had sech a good dinner sence de day befo', an' Miss Liza, she look at him fer ter see what he mean, an' he look back at her tell she hatter break out in a big laugh. She say, 'Whatever you is er mought be, you aint no shoemaker, kaze you dunner how ter make a shoe. Purty nigh all de work you done dar is teetotally wrong, an' it 'll all hatter be ripped out an' done over ag'in. Mo' dan dat, you aint never done no hard work, kaze yo' han' saft, an' yo' finger-nails look like you got somebody fer ter take keer un um.'

"De King, he et his vittles an' smack his mouf, an' den he look at Miss Liza an' she look at him, an' bimeby she hear her daddy callin' her ter dinner. De

King, he 'low, 'You'll hatter scuzen me fer keepin' you fum yo' dinner; I'm mighty sorry.' Miss Liza, she toss her head at dat an' say, 'Well, you neenter be sorry. I hope you aint got de idee in yo' head dat I was stayin' out here kaze you er here. Ef you is you git you a fine-toof comb an' git it out.' De King, he 'low, 'Oh, no; I aint got no idee like dat. I don't even b'lieve dat you fotch me any vittles out here. It wuz fer some un else.' Miss Liza bein' kinder high-falutin, want use ter dat kinder talk. She start fer ter say sump'n sassy, but des den she hear her daddy call her, an' she say, 'Yasser, I'm comin'!' an' when she turn fer ter look back de King wuz des a-laughin' fit ter kill.

"When she got back in de dinin'-room, she ax her daddy who de new man is er mought be. Her daddy make answer dat de new man mought be a heap er folks, but he aint. Den Miss Liza ax what de new man name, an' her daddy say dat so fur ez he know, de man is name Bobby Raw. Dis make Miss Liza laugh, an' she say ter herse'f dat she'd tell de yuther men 'bout de name, an' see ef dey can't have some fun out er de new man, which he know des ez much

'bout makin' shoes ez he did 'bout makin' moonshine.

"But she fergot about it atter dinner, an' she fergot about it de nex' mornin'. De new man come, but still he aint bring no dinner. Miss Liza ax him what de reason he aint fetch his dinner-basket. De new man 'low dat dey aint no use fer ter be fetchin' vittles ter dat house whar dey wuz sech a saft-hearted an' purty young 'oman ready fer ter fix up dinner fer whomsoever mought be hongry.

"Miss Liza 'low, 'Well, dat's whar youer mighty much mistaken. I gi' you yo' dinner yistiddy, kaze I wuz sorry fer you, but I aint gwine ter gi' you none ter-day, kaze you done had time fer ter make all de 'rangerments.' De new man, which he wuz de King, say, 'You aint sorry now, Miss Liza, but you will be. You'll see me settin' here pickin' my toofies wid a hog bristle, an' you'll say ter yo'se'f dat you can't let a poor lonesome man go hongry right here whar dey's so much vittles; an' den you'll go ter de table an' fix up a nice dinner an' fetch it out, an' it 'll be all de nicer bekaze you fixed it an' fetched it.'

"Miss Liza say, 'Uh-uh, man, you fool yo'se'f. I

can't be robbin' my daddy, des kaze youer too lazy fer ter fetch yo' own dinner.' De new man 'low, 'Den I reckon I'll hatter 'pen' on de King. Maybe he'll be good nuff fer ter sen' me my dinner. I know mighty well he'd sen' it ef he know'd de fix I'm in.'

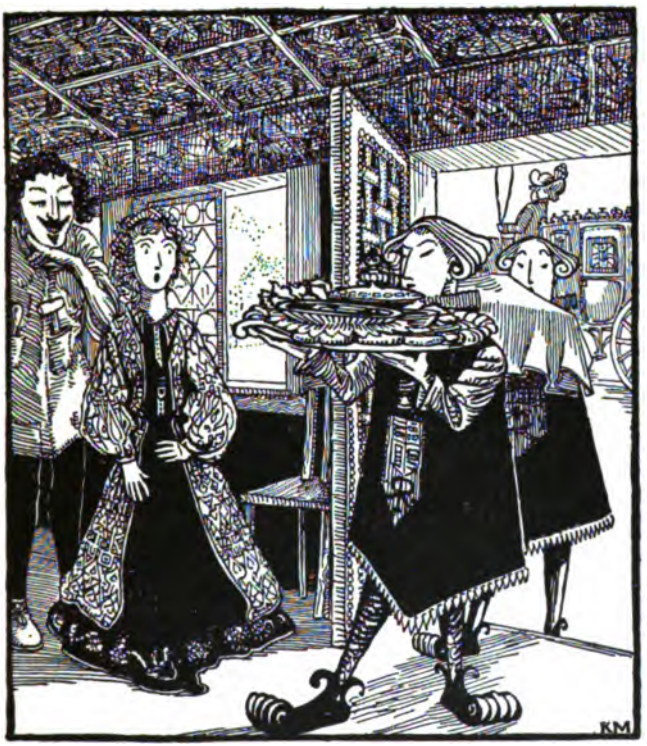
"Miss Liza, she laugh fit ter kill. She say, 'Well, den, when de King sen' you yo' dinner, I'll put it on de table fer you, an' maybe I'll he'p you eat it.' De King say, 'You'll sholy be welcome, Miss Liza; none mo' so; but I aint so mighty certain dat de King's cook is any better dan de one what fixes up de vittles in dis house.'

"Dis make Miss Liza blush, kaze she wuz de one what done de cookin', an' she sho did do it well, des like de King say. She low, 'Well, of all de men what my daddy hire, youer de freest wid yo' tongue, an' ef he know'd how you went on, he'd sen' you packin' out er dis house.' De King say, 'I hear 'im comin' now, an' ef you don't tell 'im I'll tell 'im myse'f.' Miss Liza got red in de face. She wuz madder dan a settin' hen. She shuck her finger at de new man, an' low, 'Ef you say a word ter my daddy, you'll not git no dinner here dis day—you hear dat!'

" Well, de ol' shoemaker, he come in 'bout dat time, an' he look 'roun', he did, an' ax how dey all gittin' on wid der work. He look at de new man, which he wuz de King, an' he 'low, ' You don't seem cut out fer ter make shoes; you done got dat sole on hin' side befo', an' I be bless ef you aint got de heel on de toe.' De new man say, ' Taint dat de sole's on hin' side befo'; it's de way Miss Liza tell me fer ter put de last.'

" Miss Liza say, ' Aint you 'shame er yo'se'f? I never tol' you how ter put no last. Don't you b'lieve 'im, daddy.' De ol' shoemaker, he laugh an' say dat not sence Miss Liza been born has she been so much in love wid shoemakin' ez durin' de las' two er th'ee days. ' I noticed it yistiddy,' he say, ' an' I'm havin' a new bench made fer 'er, an' I'm gwinter put it in de cornder dar so she kin show you-all how ter make a shoe.'

" Dis kinder talk rile Miss Liza so dat she flirt out er de room, an' nobody don't see 'er in de shop tell atter de dinner bell rung. When she looked in, all de hands had done gone out in de sunshine fer ter eat der dinner, ceppin' de new man, an' he wuz settin' dar makin' shoes backerds, an' puttin' pegs in de



Arrival of the King's dinner.

wrong place, an' doin' purty nigh eve'ything dat a shoemaker wouldn't er done—but he aint got no dinner. Miss Liza 'low, 'De King done fergot fer ter sen' yo' dinner, I reckon.' De new man say, 'Gi' 'im time, des gi' 'im time; an' ef he fergit ter sen' it, why we'll know dat only one out er many is settin' here hongry.'

"Wid dat, Miss Liza got blazin' mad. She flirted 'roun' de shop a time er two, and 'low, 'You aint fit ter have no dinner, an' dis de las' time I'm gwine ter fix you any. I don't see what you come yer fer anyhow. You know mighty well dat you couldn't make a shoe ef yo' life 'pended on it. You aint been here two days yit, an' you done gi' me mo' worry dan all de rest er han's put tergedder.'

"Well, des about dat time, dey wuz a big noise at de door, an' Miss Liza look out, an' dar wuz a coach an' four; an' on de inside wuz dem what had de King's dinner. Dey fotch it in, dey did, an' Miss Liza jump roun' an' show um whar ter put it; an' den dey bowed low, an' say, 'Dinner fer de new han' wid de compelerments er de King.'

"Dat dinner make Miss Liza open her eyes. De

dishes wuz bofe gol' an' silver, an' de man what fetch um got in de coach an' druv off widout sayin' whedder dey wuz comin' back atter de dishes er not. You better b'lieve dat all dis open folks's eyes, an' it kinder sot Miss Liza ter ruminatin'. Anyhow, she put de dishes on de table, an' de new han' went in an' et whar de fambly tuck der meals. An' den, atterwuds, she wash de dishes, an' look at um good. Dey had de King's name cut in um—Bobby de Raw."

Buster John was obliged to laugh at this, the name sounded so funny, and Drusilla brought it out so unexpectedly. "You neenter laugh," exclaimed Drusilla; "dis aint no funny tale, an' dat wuz de King's name—dey aint no two ways about dat."

"That certainly was his name," said the professional story-teller, stirring in his cage. "It is a corruption of Robert le Roi. Folklorists contend——" He got no farther, for Wally Wanderoon brought his cane down on the cage or box with a tremendous thwack. It was so sudden and unexpected that the children jumped. "Nex' time you skeer me outer my skin," said Drusilla, "I hope you'll take de trouble fer ter put me back ag'in."

"I can't help it," remarked Wally Wanderoon. "Why does he want to spoil a story by telling us what the folklorists think of it? Who cares what the name came from, so long as the story is rolling along on wheels, as you may say? Oh, I'm getting mighty tired of that fellow, and some day I'll start that box downhill, and I hope some of us will be at the bottom to see what happens when it stops."

"Why, I thought," said the professional story-teller, "that the more information and instruction you can put in a story——"

"Oh, will you be quiet?" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "We don't want any information in our stories. We want the plain and simple facts. Go ahead," he said, nodding to Drusilla.

"Put up yo' stick, den," she insisted, and when this condition was complied with, she took up the thread of her story. "Well, de King's name wuz Bobby de Raw. I know dat much, kaze I hear my granny call 'im dat eve'y time she tell de tale. An' his name wuz cut on de dishes. When Miss Liza see dis, she put on her thinkin' cap, she did, an' ax herse'f how come de King make hisse'f so mighty gree'ble ter dish yer man

what aint got sense nuff fer ter make a pa'r er shoes. Bimeby, she ax 'er daddy, but de ol' shoemaker wuz doin' mo' thinkin' dan talkin', an' he want sayin' nothin'.

"Den Miss Liza, hard pushed, went an' ax de new man how come de King fer ter be so good ez ter sen' his dinner, an' de man 'low dat him an' de King is ol' cronies. He say dat him an' de King done make a bargain fer ter stan' by one an'er thoo thick an' thin, an' dat fer long years bofe un um had slep' in de same bed. De man 'low dat dey been doin' dataway so long dat it got ter be a kinder habit. He say he dunner what he'd do ef he didn't sleep in de same bed wid de King.

"Miss Liza vow dat dey wuz a mighty mixtry some'rs, but she dunner wharbouts. De man say dey aint but one way fer her ter fin' out all about it, an' dat is ter marry him. Miss Liza vow an' declar' dat she won't marry nobody, much less a man dat dunner how ter make a shoe. But de man he court her, an' court her, an' court her, an' bimeby she say she'll marry him ef only fer ter fin' out what dey is twix him an' King Bobby de Raw. De man he say dat ef

she'll marry him she'll see ez much er de King ez she will er him. An' so she sot de day, an' when de time come, de King sont his big gol' an' silver coach atter de two, an' dey got in an' driv ter de house whar de King live at. De new man, he sot by Miss Liza's side, an' sorter snuggle up ter her, but he aint say nothin'. When dey come ter de place, dey wuz a great big crowd in de streets an' all roun' de house. My granny use ter say dat dey wuz so many people dar, dat dey wan't hardly standin' room fer a flea.

"Well, big ez de crowd wuz dey all make way when de coach driv up, an' de folks 'gun ter holler an' squall, an' call de name er de King, an' den dey 'gun ter sing a song 'bout Miss Liza. De folks stood back, dey did, an' de new man an Miss Liza went in de house whar de preacher wuz standin', an' dey wuz married. An' den de King led Miss Liza ter a great big gol' th'one wid silk an' satin all over it, an den she fin' out dat she done married King Bobby de Raw."

"Why, I didn't think that Kings married that way," said Buster John. "Those I read about always marry some princess or other."

"I des tol' you de tale like my granny use ter tell it. I dunner what de yuther Kings done, an' I don't keer. 'Cordin' ter de tale dish yer King Bobby Raw took an' married de shoemaker's daughter, an' atter she got use ter de house an' know'd whar ter hunt fer cobwebs, she done her queenin' des ez good ez any er de rest un um. Dat what my granny say."

"That," said the professional story-teller, "is the best story yet. It has a moral, but that moral is not obtruded——"

"Man! I shall be obliged to kill you before the day is over. If you want to tell any more stories for me and for these children, you would do well not to use any big words. Why, I could take the last one you tried to use and cut it up for kindling, and it would last an average family a week." So said Wally Wanderoon, and it was plain that he meant what he said, for he wiped the perspiration from his brow without smoothing out the terrible frown that had gathered there when the professional story-teller tried to use his big word.

Buster John and Sweetest Susan were inclined to complain because Drusilla had never told them this

story when they used to be together every day and a large part of the night, but Drusilla excused herself by saying that they had so many things to do, especially after they had visited Little Mr. Thimblefinger, in the country next door to the world, that she had never thought of it; and even if she had thought of it, there were so many better stories to be heard that she never would have told it.

"If you are all through with your stories for the time being," said the professional story-teller, "perhaps you will allow me to tell one that I have in my mind. I have an idea that it was told generations ago, in the far distant ages, when the old men gathered with the young ones around the camp-fire."

"I see perfectly well what you are up to," said Wally Wanderoon, with a frown on his face. "You want to ring in something about folklore. Well, if you do, I'll give your cage a start downhill, and when it stops, you can return and let me know. Now go ahead."

"We have been taught in different schools," replied the professional story-teller. "It was one of the principles taught at the university where I gradu-

ated that a story amounts to nothing and worse than nothing, if it is not of scientific value. I would like to tell the story first, and then give you my idea of its relation to oral literature, and its special relation to the unity of the human race."

"Well, you won't!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon; "and what's more, you shan't. These children came here on my invitation, and I'll not let them be bothered with your pesky problems. I'd as lief give them a dose of lobelia."

"I think you are very unkind," said the story-teller. "A popular tale, told from mouth to mouth, is simply one of the husks of history."

"Then give us the shucks and keep the corn, and the cob, too, for that matter—and much good may they do you," remarked Wally Wanderoon.

"Well," said the professional story-teller, with a sigh that made Sweetest Susan very sorry for him, "I tell the tale with what heart I can muster.

VIII

THE MOUSE PRINCESS

"ONCE upon a time, in a country far away, but not so far that the people were out of the world, there was a great forest of which the nobles who owned it, and the peasants who lived near by, were very proud. It was a wonderful forest, stretching across the country for miles and miles. It afforded a fine hunting ground for the nobles, and gave to the peasants a plentiful supply of faggots at all times of the year.

"But during one season, some of the finest trees in this forest began to wither and die. The tender branches turned brown, so much so that a passer-by would have said that a scorching flame had passed over the forest. Such havoc was created that the lords and nobles who owned the forest felt compelled to take measures to find out the cause of the damage. It was generally agreed that the peasants living near were the cause of the trouble; it was supposed that

they had killed the trees for the purpose of adding to their supply of fuel.

"So the proprietors of the forest, the lords and nobles, went to inquire into the matter, carrying with them their magistrates, their lawyers, and their foresters. The peasants were called together, and they assembled with fear and trembling, not knowing what was to be the outcome of it all. The magistrates went ahead with their examinations in the high and mighty way that is common to those who have charge of courts, and by their questionings succeeded in frightening some of the peasants nearly to death; but as the poor creatures knew no more of the matter than did the magistrates themselves, they could give no information on the subject. So far as their supplies of fuel were concerned, they one and all declared that the natural decay of the trees and shrubbery in a forest so vast gave them more faggots than they could possibly use.

"Now, amongst the nobles was a Prince of the Blood, and he had come with the rest with the hope of hearing some news of his daughter, whom he had lost in this forest in a very mysterious manner. Together

with a large company, he had driven along the forest road on his way to visit a neighbouring Prince. He had brought his wife with him, and his daughter, the Princess Geraldine, and they, as well as the whole company, were in the highest possible spirits. At one point on the forest road, the Princess Geraldine, a beautiful child of fifteen, saw a blue flower growing by the roadside, and she begged to be allowed to jump from the coach and pluck it. In the midst of much good humour, there could be no refusal. So the Princess Geraldine ran back a little way to where she had seen the blue flower, and then, although watchful eyes were on her, she suddenly disappeared, and was seen no more.

"As may be supposed, a great hue and cry was raised, and grief took the place of joy in that large company, for the Princess Geraldine was loved by all who knew her. The forest was searched far and near, but not a trace of the Princess could be found. The search continued until all hope was given up, and then the company sadly returned to the capital.

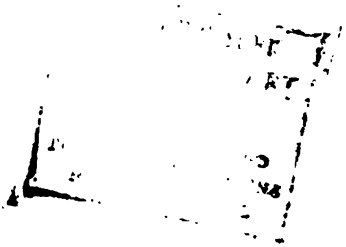
"Like other things, the disappearance of the young

Princess was soon forgotten, or it was referred to as one of the mysteries which cannot be fathomed; but the father of Geraldine did not forget, and he had accompanied the nobles and the magistrates in the hope of hearing something of his daughter. He was unwilling to believe that he should never see her again. Moreover, sorrow had softened his heart, and but for his influence the innocent peasants would have been put to the torture, in the hope of compelling them to confess that they or some of their neighbours were guilty of blighting the trees.

"Among those present at the court was the son of a peasant, a tall, handsome lad, whose whole appearance was different from that of the forest-dwellers. He was fair, with curling hair and dark blue eyes, and he held himself as proudly as any of the nobles, though he was neither proud nor vain. On the contrary, he was very modest and humble, but in appearance he was in every way superior to those among whom he dwelt.

"The name of this lad was Larro, a word which, in the language of that country, meant the Lucky One. When you come to study words closely, you will find

The Court.



that they contain, in one way and another, a good deal of history. If I had my choice——

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon indignantly; "do you want me to murder you? Why, just that kind of talk has done more harm in this world than you can imagine. But wait until I make a fire and heat a kettle of water—then I'll be ready to take the hair and hide off of you when you try to come it over these innocent children with your scientific palaver."

When the professional story-teller began again, it was in a more subdued tone—

"Well, the lad I have been trying to tell you about was named Larro, and although he was the eldest son of a peasant family, he was much handsomer, and very much more intelligent, than his father and mother, or his brothers and sisters. This was because he was the godson of a good fairy named Larroline. This good fairy chanced to be visiting some of her friends in that neighbourhood when the child was born, and she made her appearance in the room where the cradle stood, and waved her shining wand thrice, saying, 'His name shall be Larro; he shall grow up virtuous

and wise, handsome and strong, and his fortune shall be made ere he come of age.' With that, the good fairy saluted the small company there assembled, and disappeared.

"The babe grew according to the promises made in its behalf, developing into a handsome young man, who, with the rest of the peasants, was in attendance on the forest court set up by the nobles and the King's magistrates. Larro's appearance was so different from that of the people of the neighbourhood, that he attracted the attention of the judges and the notabilities. The Prince was especially struck by the modest and manly bearing of the lad, and while the magistrates were in a great fume on account of the stupidity of some of the peasants who had been questioned, he suggested that the lad be called.

"Whereupon, Larro was summoned before the court. He told his name and his age, and then before the magistrates could ask him further questions, he raised his head, and said with a bright smile, 'Your Honours, you have called every witness but the right one.' He pointed to a pine, which was as tall as the tallest tree in the forest, and stood in plain view. Its

topmost limbs were burned as if some flying demon had sailed over it, breathing out fire. 'I am a forester, Your Honours, but never have I been able to climb to the lowest limb of yonder tree. Whatever blighted the rest of the trees has blighted the top of the pine.'

"'The lad is right,' said the Prince; 'his common sense has settled the whole question.' The magistrates were not as well pleased with Larro as the Prince appeared to be. They rather resented the idea that a peasant lad should be able to see things in a clearer light than they had seen them. They adjourned the court, but not before one of the surliest of the judges rebuked Larro for not giving his information sooner. 'I am afraid to think, Your Honour, what would have happened to me had I been impertinent enough to break in upon your solemn proceedings.'

"'You are a wise lad," said the Prince, laughing, 'and I must have a talk with you before we go.'

"Don't you think," remarked Wally Wanderoon, looking at the children, and winking solemnly, "that

you are putting some very high-sounding words in the mouth of a peasant lad?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the professional story-teller, with some heat; "he was the godson of a fairy, as I have already told you. Do you expect a lad like that to be as ignorant as the rest of the peasants? If so, what is the use of having a fairy godmother?"

"Good!" cried Wally Wanderoon, clapping his hands. "Capital! You are growing in my affections, and you'll soon work your way out of that cage. You were put in there, you remember, because you wanted to place the fairies on a scientific basis. But I'll not expose you; go right ahead with the story."

"It will never be told if you go on interrupting me like that," said the man in the cage. He paused a moment, to make sure that he was not to be interrupted again, and then took up the thread of the story.

"As you may have gathered from what I have said, the Prince was very much taken with Larro. He invited the lad to dine with him—all the notabilities had brought their lunch-baskets along. During the meal, which lasted a long time, and which was the finest the

lad had ever tasted, the Prince had an opportunity to tell Larro of the loss of his dear daughter. The lad, however, knew all the particulars. He informed the Prince that not a day passed that he did not search for the missing Princess, and he went so far as to say that he had strong hopes of finding her.

"'If you find her, my lad,' cried the Prince, 'I will make your fortune. I promise beforehand to grant any request that you may be pleased to make.' Then he gave Larro directions as to where he could be found, and was for giving him then and there a large sum of money to aid him in the search. But the lad shook his head, saying it would be time enough to talk about money when it was needed. The only gift he would accept was a dozen loaves of white bread. He had never seen such a thing before, and he wanted it for his father and mother, who had never tasted it, and who were not willing to believe that there was such a thing.

"Larro's statement caused the Prince to grow thoughtful. He knew that the peasants ate black bread, but he had supposed that they preferred it. Acting upon an impulse, the Prince caused all the

white bread that was left over to be distributed among the peasants who were present, and they seemed to be very happy over the gift.

"The notabilities and the magistrates lost no time in returning to court, and the forest soon regained its accustomed serenity. Larro redoubled his efforts to find the Princess Geraldine, but he knew, as he had known all along, that he would never succeed without the aid of Larroline, his fairy godmother. How to find his godmother he knew not. For many months he had waited on the chance that she might make her appearance at any time, but at last he found that this was not the way of fairies. So he went into the forest, and, taking his seat by a huge hollow tree, began to call the name of his godmother.

"'Not quite so loud!' said a voice quite close to his ear. The voice was soft and sweet as the tinkle of a silver bell. He turned, and saw standing at his side the daintiest and most beautiful creature his eyes had ever beheld. She smiled and threw him a kiss from the pink tips of her little fingers. 'I don't know who you are,' said Larro, 'but I thank you for coming, for I can send by you a message to my dear god-

mother. Her name is Larroline, and I am sure you can find her.'

"'Did you ever call on her by name before to-day?' Larro shook his head. 'Well, that is the reason you have failed to find her. When you called she came, and here she is. I am your godmother, at your service.' She waved her little white hand, and gave him a charming smile. 'You shall know,' she continued, 'that the laws of the fairies do not permit them to interfere with the affairs of mortals at their will and pleasure. It is only on special occasions, as on a flower festival, or what you would call a holiday, that we can address ourselves to mortals unless we are summoned by those in whom we have a peculiar interest. You were born on one of our flower festivals, and that is how I came to be your godmother.'

"'I am sure I thank you heartily for being so kind,' said Larro.

"'Oh, it was a mere whim of mine,' continued Larroline, 'but I am glad the whim seized me there and then, for you have grown to be very much to my taste. We fairies are very much like mortals in some respects; we are always itching to mix in human affairs.

Mortals are so clumsy and awkward, and do so many foolish and cruel things, that we feel like helping them to be graceful and kind-hearted. So you see our laws are wise ones. If they were different, we would be tangled in most of the happenings that occur on this old earth. Not all of us desire to help mortals, however, for there are some very evil-minded ones among us. They are among us, but not of us. Such as these are never so happy as when they are sowing grief and sorrow among the poor creatures who inhabit the earth.'

"Larroline sat swinging on the leaf of a large fern that grew close at hand, and Larro thought she was the most bewitching creature his eyes had ever beheld. He told her of his desire to rescue the young Princess Geraldine if she were still alive, and in the course of a very few moments he learned that the Princess was alive and well, but very unhappy. The facts in her case were soon told. Her grandfather had in some way made an enemy of a powerful wizard who lived in the middle of the largest mountain in India. Among his servants was the wicked fairy Mibble-mobble. She it was who changed the rain into hail,

Larro and Larroline.

destroying the grapes, and battering down the rye. She it was who made the cow go dry, who knotted the horses' manes and tails, and rode them out in the night, thereby unfitting them for work the next day. It was she who addled the eggs of the sitting hens, and caused the milk to sour; and it was she who placed the blue flowers by the roadside, and it was she who caused the young Princess Geraldine to disappear.

"Yes, indeed! All this and much more Larroline told her godson, as she sat swinging on the fern leaf. She told him how Mibblemobble caused Geraldine to take the shape of a tiny mouse, whereupon she herself took the shape of a black wolf, and, seizing the poor little mouse between her teeth, made off through the forest, going so rapidly that those who were searching for the Princess imagined that they saw a black wolf in different parts of the wood at the same time.

"'I have been very sorry for the poor Princess all along,' said Larroline, 'but I have been unable to help her. Mibblemobble is not ruled by our dear Queen, but, as I have told you, is controlled by the monster who lives in the mountain in India. All that

I can do to aid you is to give you certain directions by means of which, if you are wise and brave, you will be able to outwit the wicked creature and rescue the Princess. You must not forget that the young Princess is now in the shape of a mouse, and you must be very careful about following my directions. You cannot mistake the mouse Princess. One of her ears is white, and the other pink; there is no other mouse like the mouse Princess.'

"Larroline gave her godson all the directions that she thought necessary, and then bade him good-bye, promising to assist him as well as she could. Larro went home, put on a stouter suit of clothes, tied a handkerchief around his neck, placed some food in a wallet,—his mother insisted on giving him the white bread,—selected a bludgeon from the many that he had idly gathered in the wood, embraced his mother, and set out on his journey with high hopes and a light heart.

"He paused on the edge of the forest to wave his hand to his mother, who had come a little way with him, and was soon lost to sight in the gloomy depths of the wood. But he was no whit afraid, nor did he

think of the shadows as gloomy ones. He had known the forest all his life, and he felt that the forest knew him, and so he went along right cheerfully. He was so cheerful indeed that he whistled as he walked along the dim path; and sometimes, from mere excess of energy, he increased his pace from a rapid walk to a jog-trot. He had worked hard all his life, and he had never known what real fatigue was. He had been hungry and sleepy,—yes, many a time,—but tired, never.

"After a time, he found himself out of the forest and on the King's highway, which ran between the wood and the cultivated lands. He knew that he must cross these lands, but he saw no way. To walk through the fields where the crops were growing would be trespass, and so he journeyed on, in the hope of coming to a stile, or a by-path, but he saw none. His godmother had told him that there was a way, if he would find it, and so he kept on until he came to an old man who was contentedly eating his midday meal.

"The sight of food gave Larro a pinch of hunger, so he saluted the old man with a good-day, and sat

down beside him. The lad was soon engaged in eating his white bread, and as soon as the old man caught sight of it, he rose and made a low bow, saying, 'My lord, I bid you good-morning!'

"'I am no more a lord than you are,' explained Larro with a laugh. 'I am simply the son of a peasant, and if you will accept some of my white bread, you are more than welcome to it.'

"The old man thankfully accepted the bread, remarking that he was bowing to the future, and not to the present; and he reminded Larro of the old saying—

"'Who shares his dinner with the poor,
Will always find an open door.'

"The old man ate his bread with great relish, nodding his head, and mumbling thanks over what he considered his good fortune. When the two were through with their meal, and had rested a while, Larro asked the old man how it was possible to cross the cultivated lands without trespassing.

"Whereupon, his companion stared at him with astonishment. 'Well, well, well!' and 'Oho!' said

he. 'Why, this fetches my dream true!' and with that he began to chuckle as though he was very much amused.

"'Faith! it seems to tickle you,' remarked Larro; 'but with me it is no laughing matter.'

"'It is this way, young master: I am a great dreamer, but never before did I have a dream to come true right before my eyes; and yet this is what has happened. One night a month ago, the moon being full, I dreamed that someone called me, saying—

"'Peter, Peter! wise old Peter!
A road must be made for the white-bread eater.'

"'Off my pallet I rolled and bestirred myself. I was no road-maker, but my dream sat as heavy on my stomach as a full meal. I took to the highway, and soon had a summons from the lord of these lands, who wanted a ditch made across them. I have dug many ditches in my day and time, but never before was I called on to dig one across level land; but it is all plain now. The ditch was made for you; it will serve you instead of a road.'

"Larro concealed his surprise as well as he could,

but he followed the old man, and they were soon journeying across the cultivated lands. Though the ditch had been dug but a short time, its banks were already shaded by a growth of shrubbery and fruit trees, and when they had come near to the farthest end of the ditch, the old man called Larro's attention to a cherry tree growing close to the edge. And, in truth, that tree was a curiosity. It was not different from other trees of its kind, save in this, that while other cherry trees had borne their fruit some months before, this cherry tree bore three luscious-looking cherries. They glittered in the sunshine like glass. One was red, one was blue, and the third was yellow; and they were so tempting that Larro wondered why they had not been plucked.

"'If I were you,' said the old man to Larro, 'I would take the cherries and save them against a rainy day. They may serve you a good turn. For example: should you need a light, the yellow cherry will furnish you with a very bright one; should you by chance come to the cabin of a little old woman, you will be able to swap your red cherry for a walking-cane that will help you on your way; and should you

find yourself at the house of another old woman, not far from a chalk-pit, I warrant that a sight of the blue cherry would make her mouth water. Better take them along, my young master.'

" Larro had small choice in the matter, for the old man plucked the cherries from the tree and placed them in the lad's wallet. And then, as they had now reached the end of the ditch, Larro turned to thank his companion and bid him good-bye; but he was nowhere to be seen; he had vanished. After looking about him and calling in vain, Larro turned toward the highway with a laugh. The old man appeared to be such a commonplace, everyday sort of a body that the idea never entered Larro's head that he had any relation to the magic work of the fairies; and although the lad laughed, he went forward with a stouter heart, for he now felt assured that he was to have the assistance of the little people, as the fairies were called.

" So he went along the highway feeling very happy. He trudged along, whistling a cheerful tune, and in the course of the day placed many a mile behind him. Toward evening, he came to a point where a foot-

path intersected the highway. He knew that he must take this path if he hoped to come to his journey's end, but he paused and thought the matter over very seriously, for the pathway led into a very dense and dark forest, in which—though the sun had not set—night had already fallen. It is one thing to follow a broad highway when the sun is shining and the birds singing, but it was quite another thing to plunge into an unknown forest just as night is coming on, utterly ignorant of what is before you.

"But Larro was so familiar with his own great forest, which had been his home as well as his school, that his hesitation lasted not more than a quarter of an hour. He tightened his belt and went forward along the pathway with a confident air. As he went deeper and deeper into the wood, it grew darker and darker, and presently the light was shut out altogether, so that he had great trouble in following the crooked path.

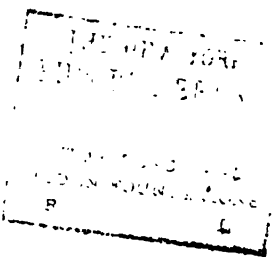
"He had been walking in the darkness only a short time when he became aware that some creature was following him. First on one side of the path and then on the other, he heard the patter of feet. Some-

times the creature would pause until Larro became easier in his mind, and then it would come up behind him with a rush, swerving from the path just before it reached him. Sometimes it would run ahead and take up a position in the path, its eyes gleaming balefully.

"When he came to a part of the forest where the trees were not so thick, he discovered that the creature which had been threatening him was nothing less than a big black wolf; and then he remembered with some dismay what his fairy godmother had told him of the big black wolf that had seized the Princess Geraldine. Just when his courage was about to leave him, he thought of the yellow cherry which was to furnish him a light, and he wondered that he had not thought of it before. He fumbled about in his wallet until he found it, and he had no sooner brought it out into the air than it began to shed a strong and steady light, which enabled him to see very clearly. The black wolf snarled and growled, and then disappeared to trouble him no more. But Larro deemed it safer to seek no rest until he was well beyond the limits of the dark wood.

"How long he had been walking he could never have guessed, but after a while light took the place of darkness, his yellow cherry went out, as we say of a lamp, and he soon came to where the sun was shining as brightly as it shone the day before. With only a rest for dinner, he had been walking a day and a night, and so when he deemed himself at a safe distance from the gloomy wood, he ate a light breakfast, and made his bed in the shade of a hawthorn tree and slept until the middle of the day. When he awoke he tried to take note of his surroundings, but he was in a strange part of the country, and for a while he knew not which way to turn. He wandered about until he came to a dim trail, a mere shadow of a path. He followed it for an hour or more, and then he came in sight of a hovel. He knocked, but received no answer, and, as the door was open, he made bold to enter. There were no windows to the hut, and the interior was very dark; but when Larro's eyes became used to the darkness, he saw a little old woman sitting in a corner. She was very small, but her face was so full of wrinkles that there was no room for any more. She sat by a tiny spinning

Larro, followed by the wolf, lights his way with the yellow cherry.



wheel, and seemed to be engaged in examining its parts.

"'Good-day, mother,' said Larro.

"She brushed her grey hair out of her eyes and looked up at the lad. 'Ho-ho-ho!' she cackled. 'And so it is a good day, is it? Who told you so?'

"'Why, I hoped it was a good day for you, mother —and for me,' Larro replied.

"'Well said, dearie; very well said; but who can tell?' With that the little old woman began to laugh, and, in doing so, multiplied the wrinkles a thousandfold. 'What fetches you here, dearie? I never saw you before. Did you by any chance pass through the Wood of the Wolves?'

"'Why, as to that, I know not, mother, being a stranger to this part of the country,' answered Larro; 'but I came through a great forest last night, and a big black wolf was snapping at my heels nearly the whole way.'

"The little old woman appeared to be greatly surprised. 'Well, well!' she cried, and then, 'What are we coming to, I wonder? Why, for more than fifty years no human being has entered the Wood of

the Wolves on foot and come out alive—not one. And here is a slip of a lad who walks right through.' The little old woman seemed to regard the event as a joke, for she chuckled with great glee. Then, suddenly, she became serious, puckering her face until wrinkles were piled on wrinkles.

" As Larro examined the inside of the hut, his eyes fell on a beautiful walking-cane. The top piece was of gold, curiously carved, and the cane itself had queer carvings that extended its entire length. ' That is a beautiful cane you have, mother," said he.

" The little old woman sat with her face puckered and her eyes closed, as if reflecting over some hard problem. ' Oh, the cane!' she cried, after a while. ' The cane, of course. Well, it is a very fine cane, but I will sell it dirt-cheap. Yes, indeed, I will give it to anyone who will give me a ripe red cherry. The season is over and gone, but a ripe red cherry I must have before I part with the cane.'

" Larro lost no time in producing the red cherry, and the little old woman, when she saw it, ran and brought the cane, and seemed glad to part with it on

such terms; and this made Larro a trifle suspicious. What if the real owner of the cane should claim it? This seemed to him such an important matter that he frankly told the little old woman what was in his mind.

"'Someone will claim the cane, dearie—you may be sure of that. But what if they do? You have only to use the cane as a sword, and your enemies will flee before you; but if you allow it to pass from your hands, you will be powerless. And I am so sure you will be wheedled out of it that I intend to follow you and fetch a handkerchief to dry your eyes when you cry.'

"'You may fetch the handkerchief, mother, for the other fellow will need it.' The little old woman made no reply to this, but placed the cane in Larro's hands, and took the cherry, which she fondled greedily.

"Larro thanked her, and continued his journey with a light heart. He threw his bludgeon away, and followed the dim path flourishing his walking-cane. In the course of an hour, he came to a broader road, and into this he turned, following it until his appetite

informed him it was dinner time. He seated himself by the roadside, as he had done the day before, and began to eat his dinner, not forgetting that his supply of food was growing smaller and smaller.

"While he was thus engaged he heard the sound of heavy footsteps approaching, and presently there came into view a man who had the marks of a ruffian written all over him. He had a heavy beard, and long black hair which, from its appearance, had never been touched by a comb. He looked at Larro with a frown, and then his attention was attracted by the walking-cane.

"'Oho!' he cried. 'You have my walking-cane. I am obliged to you for finding it for me. You have saved me many weary steps, my lad, and you deserve something for your trouble. What shall it be?'

"Larro hardly knew what to say, or how to act. The man, though very ill-looking, spoke fairly. Perhaps he had been led into a trap, and he could imagine the little old woman chuckling with glee over his predicament. Nevertheless, he determined to make the most of an opportunity to test the truth of what she had told him. 'You owe me nothing,' said Larro

to the stranger, 'and so far we are even. The cane is not yours and never will be; more than that, you never saw it before.'

"The man frowned fiercely, puffed out his cheeks, and ground his teeth together in a way that would have made the flesh of a timid lad creep. 'What!' he cried. 'Do you mean to steal my cane? Will you defy me to my face? Why, I'll wring your neck, boy!' With that the man made a feint of rushing at Larro; but the lad had risen to his feet, and instead of dropping the cane and running away, as his enemy expected him to do, he thrust at the man, and gave him a hard jab with the cane. This seemed to be more than sufficient, for the ruffian took to his heels and ran headlong into the woods, roaring as if he had received a mortal wound.

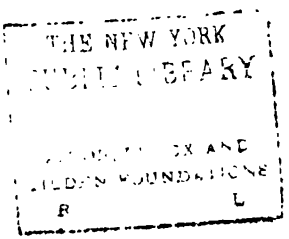
"You may be sure that Larro was pleased with his wonderful cane. He thought of his mother and how pleased she would be to know that he had vanquished his foe; and he thought also of the poor young Princess, whose rescue he had undertaken. But these thoughts did not prevent him from finishing his dinner. This meal disposed of, he took to the road

again, taking no account of the miles he was travelling, or of the weary journey he had before him.

"When night came, he sought and found a place to sleep beneath a clump of sheltering trees. Once during the night, he awoke with the feeling that someone was near, but the darkness was such that he could not see very far. He tried to lie awake and listen, but in spite of all he could do, his eyelids drooped, and he was soon sound asleep again. He awoke in the morning with all his faculties confused, and for a few moments he hardly knew where he was; but he rubbed his eyes, and gradually collected his thoughts, and the first thing he discovered was the fact that he was very hungry. There was nothing strange about this, for he had gone supperless to bed, in order that his supply of food might last longer.

"But when he lifted the wallet which held his supply of provisions, he found that it was quite heavy. Evidently someone had filled it while he slept. He was very glad of this; but in the midst of his thankfulness, he discovered that his walking-cane had disappeared. He was so disturbed at this that his hunger left him. He searched everywhere, but the search

Larro, by means of his cane, puts a ruffian to flight.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proved a fruitless one, and he soon gave up all hope of recovering it.

"His appetite returned, and when he had strengthened himself with a hearty meal, he felt inclined to make light of the loss of his magic cane. He remembered that he had started from home without it, and had got along very well up to the moment when it came into his possession. A full stomach makes a stout heart, and he would have forgotten all about the cane if he had not discovered that two travellers were coming along the road behind him, and that one of them was the ruffian who had tried to frighten him into surrendering the cane.

"When he saw this man, he knew that mischief was brewing, and so he quickened his pace into a rapid walk. When a turn in the road concealed him from his pursuers, he began to run, and in this way gained considerably on them. Fortunately, the road was a very crooked one. It wound about among the trees, turning first to the north, and then to the east again. In this way he managed to place a considerable distance between the men and himself.

"But the ruffians knew the road better than Larro

did, and at one point where the road made a short half-circle, they cut across the woods, and came into the road very close behind him. He was not frightened, for when he discovered the loss of his cane, he had cut a stout bludgeon for defensive purposes. Nevertheless, he knew that he would be no match for the two ruffians. He ran as fast as he could, and tried hard to outfoot them, but they ran as fast as he did, and he finally decided to turn about and face them.

"Just at that moment the little old woman came out of the wood a little way ahead of Larro, and stood waiting for him. She carried the cane that he thought was lost, and she seemed to be highly amused as he came up. The ruffians were not far behind him. But they halted when they saw him halt, and stood whispering together. The companion of the ruffian who had tried to attack Larro the day before seemed inclined to withdraw. This led to an angry dispute, and in a very few moments the ruffians came to blows.

"'Now is your time, dearie,' said the little old woman. 'Take the cane and teach them a lesson.'

"This was quite to the taste of Larro, and he was quick to follow the little old woman's suggestion, and

he employed his cane very effectively, taking care not to use it on the ruffian who had grown faint-hearted. But he gave his enemy of the day before the full benefit of the magic power of the cane, and soon had him prostrate on the ground begging for mercy. When Larro permitted him to rise to his feet, he lost no time in taking to his heels, and was soon out of sight. His companion had already disappeared, and Larro felt sure that they would trouble him no more.

"The little old woman greeted Larro with a chuckle when he returned. 'You have done well, dearie—very well, indeed. I have a present for my sister which I forgot to give you yesterday.' She took from her pocket a hank of yarn that she had spun on her tiny spinning-wheel. Larro had never seen anything like it. Its threads were as fine and as strong as those of a spider's web, and, small as it was, it must have contained a thousand yards of yarn. 'If my sister doesn't like the yarn, and refuses to accept it as a present from me, just throw it over her head.'

"'Where shall I find your sister?' Larro inquired.

"'Never mind, dearie; you will find her soon

enough.' With that the little old woman turned into the wood, and was soon out of sight. Larro continued his journey, and, by the aid of his cane, was soon out of the hill country. In no long time, he found himself travelling over a wide plain that was dotted with clumps of shrubbery, and with the huts of labourers—workers in the chalk pits. The soil was no longer black and grey; it was as white as flour from the mills; and the shrubbery and the thatched roofs of the huts were covered with fine white dust.

" Pretty soon the road dwindled away till it became a footpath, and then, like a white snake, it wound around deep pits and between the huts, and then disappeared altogether. Larro saw a woman sitting in the door of one of the huts. He saluted her politely, and then—' Where am I? ' he asked.

" ' Why, you are here at my door. Where else should you be? ' replied the woman, regarding him with astonishment. Evidently she took Larro for a simpleton.

" ' What part of the country am I in? ' he asked.

" ' Why, in this part, to be sure,' the woman answered.

"'Has the settlement no name?' inquired Larro.

"'What good would a name do?' said the woman. 'All I know is that it is hard work to keep body and soul together in this wild barren. But there is one here that should know. Do you see that hut standing by itself? Well, that is the home of the Mouse Mother. She spends her time nursing a parcel of mice, but how can she earn a living at that business is more than I can tell you. But if you call on her, be careful. I have sent more than one visitor to her door, and no one has ever laid eyes on them again. I hope you'll have better luck, but I doubt it.'

"Larro lost no time in making his way to the hut, that stood solitary and alone on the verge of the oldest and deepest chalk-pit in the settlement. The door was open, but he knocked to attract the woman's attention. She promptly answered the knock, and Larro, who expected to see an ill-favoured hag, was astonished to find himself in the presence of a handsome young woman, with brilliant eyes, long black hair, and rosy cheeks.

"He took it for granted that this was the daughter, and, after saluting her by taking off his hat, he

asked if he might see her mother. She laughed, showing beautiful white teeth, and declared that she couldn't remember the day when she had a mother. 'Won't you come in and rest yourself?' she said. 'I am raising mice for sale; perhaps you would like to buy one. I have been trying to sell some of them for a long time, but have never yet succeeded.'

"'I wonder why?' Larro declared. 'There is nothing I would like better than to buy a mouse. I have been trying all my life to find a mouse with one pink ear and one white one. I have heard that there are such mice, but I have never seen one, and lately I have come to the conclusion that those who told me were drawing the long bow.'

"'Oh! you are mistaken!' exclaimed the woman. 'I have one of them, and it is a great curiosity. I have been offered large sums of money for this mouse, but I have little need of money. Still, I will sell the mouse, or swap it for something I have never seen.'

"Larro went into the hut, and stared with astonishment. On each and every wall there were rows of tiny cages in which there were mice. Some were asleep, and some were trying to gnaw their way out.

On a small table in one corner of the hut there was a large cage, and in this was the mouse that Larro had travelled so far to find. He watched the woman narrowly, but she seemed to be the soul of innocence. To all appearance, she had nothing to conceal, and her countenance was as open as the day.

"The mouse with the pink and white ears seemed to be asleep when Larro entered the hut, but when it heard his voice, it ran around the cage squeaking in a pitiful way, and making vain efforts to get out of its prison. He paid no attention to these movements, fearing that the woman would suspect his intentions. 'It is a beauty,' said Larro, 'and I should like very much to buy it from you.'

"'I am afraid that is impossible,' the woman replied. 'I have been told that there is such a thing as a blue cherry, and I have said time and time again that whoever presents me with a blue cherry shall have the choice of my mice. But, as you felt about the pink-and-white-eared mice, so I feel about the blue cherries. I have made up my mind that there are no such cherries.'

"'Well,' said Larro, 'as you have astonished me,

it is only fair that I should astonish you.' As he spoke, he produced the blue cherry, and thrust it in the woman's hand.

"'A blue cherry!' she cried. 'Impossible! you are trying to deceive me. It is painted; it is not a cherry at all!' She was so astonished that she sank into the only chair in the room, and seemed quite overcome. Larro, knowing that she would never exchange the mouse for the cherry, took from his pocket the hank of yarn, and threw it over her head, saying as he did so, 'Here is a present from your sister. Make the most of it.'

"The woman fell from the chair to the floor in her efforts to release herself from the hank of yarn, which, in a curious fashion, had enveloped her whole body, and seemed to draw tighter and tighter the more she struggled. Larro knew that this was his opportunity, and so he seized the cage in which the pink-and-white-eared mouse was imprisoned, and started to leave the hut; but he was met at the door by a man who was almost a giant in stature, who cried out what he meant by attacking and robbing an honest woman.

"But Larro remembered his cane, and he used it

on the man to such purpose that his antagonist vanished into thin air. The lad then concluded that the cage would be too unwieldy a burden to carry, and so he released the mouse, and allowed it to crawl up his sleeve. This the little creature was quick to do, and it remained so quiet and contented that Larro was in danger of forgetting about it.

"He went back the way he had come, and by the aid of his walking-cane he reached home much sooner than he had expected to; and you may be sure that he was welcomed by his mother and father, and also by the neighbours, who never knew, until he had gone on his long journey, how much they had been cheered by his good humour and his happy disposition. All the peasants were glad of his return, and they showed it in various ways.

"Larro was very glad of all this, but he still had before him a mystery as great as that which was occasioned by the disappearance of the Princess Geraldine. He had rescued Geraldine from the hands of her captors, but she still retained the shape of a mouse—a very pretty mouse, it is true, but still a mouse. The great question was how was she to be restored to

the shape which made her the most beautiful girl in the kingdom.

"Larro was greatly troubled over this. He knew that if he went to the Prince, carrying the mouse, and said to him, 'Here, Your Highness, is your daughter. I promised to rescue her, and I have been as good as my word'—he knew that if he went with any such tale as this, he would be flouted at court, and, in all probability, cast into prison as an impudent impostor. He knew not what to do, and yet he was very impatient. He never lost his good humour, however, and when he was worried the worst, he would turn for consolation to his beautiful mouse. The little creature was very playful, and Larro spent many an hour watching its antics. It seemed to be perfectly contented when it was with Larro, and when he left it in a cosey little box that he had made for it, it was restless until he returned.

"Many days passed in this way, and after a while Larro began to fear that the young Princess was never to be restored to her family and friends in any other shape than that of a mouse. Not a day passed that he did not call on his godmother, but she seemed to

Larro rescues the mouse-princess.

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be deaf to his entreaties, for she failed to answer his summons. At last, after many long and weary days, Larroline made her appearance in response to the pleadings of Larro.

"'I have been having troubles of my own,' she explained. 'Owing to my interest in you and the young Princess, the monster in India summoned me to appear before his tribunal. I refused, of course, and then he threatened to make war on our dear Queen. As we are not warlike in our dispositions, there was considerable disturbance. At last, at my request, the Queen banished me from her kingdom for three months. The monster in India thought that he or some of his servants would be able to seize me; but I kept out of their way; and the term of my banishment is now over. And now, what can I do for you?'

"Whereupon Larro told her that the Princess Geraldine was as far from being restored to her parents and friends as ever, and he asked his godmother to aid him in the matter. At this request, the good fairy grew sad. 'There is only one way to restore her to her parents and friends,' said Larroline, 'and if you persist in following that way, you

will be exposed to ridicule and insult, perhaps to imprisonment. In short, you will have serious trouble.'

"'Why, as to that,' responded Larro, 'there is nothing but trouble in this world, anyway, and I may as well begin to have mine; I have had little so far.'

"'Well, you must decide the matter for yourself. If you would have the Princess Geraldine resume her natural shape, you must journey toward the capital. On your way thither, you must endeavour, in every town, to find some minister who will be willing to marry you to a mouse. You will find none, of course, but you must continue firm in your purpose, and make application to every priest and public official that you can find. I warn you beforehand,' continued Larroline, 'that this will make you notorious wherever you go and subject you to many indignities.'

"Larro thought the matter over, and while he was hesitating the poor little mouse crept into his hand, and looked at him so pitifully that he made up his mind to undertake the task, no matter what might happen. So he started the next day, and at every hamlet and village where there was a priest or public official, he made known his desire to be married to a

mouse, and to show that he made the request in good faith, he produced the mouse that he desired to marry.

"You may be sure that he became notorious, so much so that his notoriety ran before him, and reached the capital, where the Prince lived, long before Larro did. He was hissed out of hamlets, and hooted out of villages, and when he was engaged in retiring as peacefully as he could, he was followed by a rabble which pelted him with stones, and pursued him with curses. He found himself in a very bad way, indeed; and when he thought that he had reached the limit of his persecutions, he was seized and thrown in jail.

"This occurred in a town which was only a few hours' journey from the capital—a town which was proud of its nearness to the seat of government, and which strove to pattern itself after the capital, which was the home of the Prince and the headquarters of justice. The dignitaries sat upon Larro's case, and sought to do that which they thought would be done at the capital. It was a case that had no precedent. All the records were searched in vain to discover the penalty attached to the crime of desiring to marry a mouse. Musty old documents were brought to light,

and even tradition was appealed to. But the musty old documents were silent on the subject, and tradition had nothing to say.

"The magistrates, however, thought that it would be well to detain Larro until they could receive advices from the capital. So they flung him into prison, where he would have been inconsolable, but for the companionship of his dear little mouse, which amused him by its playfulness, and cheered him by a hundred little tokens of affection.

"The authorities at the capital were a long time in acting, and finally appealed to the Prince, who was more struck by the humour of the affair than by its seriousness. His decision was that the man who wanted to marry a mouse was a harmless lunatic, and he ordered that Larro be conveyed to the capital, so that his case might be inquired into. Accordingly, the long-suffering lad was released from prison, and carried before the Prince. The officials who had him in charge maintained such a gravity of demeanour, and conducted themselves with such solemnity, that Larro could hardly restrain his laughter.

"The Prince knew Larro at once, and felt sorry that

Larro, thrown into prison, is comforted by his little companion.

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such a bright lad should have lost his mind; and with his sympathy came the thought that the Prince himself was responsible for Larro's condition. The greeting of the Prince was very cordial. He had been attracted to the lad from the first, and, if appearances were not deceitful, Larro still retained all those qualities that had drawn the attention of the Prince. He bore the marks of ill-usage, but in other respects he was unchanged.

"After thanking them for their zeal in the matter, the Prince dismissed the solemn officials who had taken Larro in charge, and then he turned to the lad for an explanation. 'What is this I hear?' inquired the Prince. 'The report is that you are travelling about over the kingdom trying to find someone who will marry you to a mouse. It is incredible. Surely a lad as bright as you seem to be cannot have lost your mind. What is the truth of the matter?'

"'The report is true, Your Highness. I have no higher ambition than to marry a mouse—or, rather, the particular mouse that I have in my possession.'

"The Prince showed no sign of astonishment or

disgust. He spoke as if he considered Larro perfectly sane. 'What put such a humourous idea in your head?' asked the Prince, laughing heartily.

"Larro thought the Prince was laughing because the proposition was such an absurd one, and he blushed with embarrassment; but he was persistent. "It can do no harm, Your Highness. I cannot tell you why it is necessary for me to marry the mouse. I can only say that you will be made happy by granting it, and that all those who have persecuted me as a knave or a lunatic will regret it as long as they live.'

"'Well, it is your affair,' said the Prince. 'Of course I think it is very foolish, but we cannot all be wise. Have you any news of my daughter?'

"'I have, Your Highness—great news. When you have permitted me to marry the mouse, you shall know all.'

"So the Prince summoned one of his magistrates, and commanded him to marry Larro to the mouse. The magistrate protested, but the Prince insisted, and, finally, all the arrangements for the wedding were made. The news of this queer ceremony flew from tongue to tongue, and presently Larro had more

witnesses than he cared to face. The magistrate was as solemn as he could be under the circumstances, but he could not refrain from showing his disgust. He changed the form of the ceremony somewhat. Instead of saying, Will you take this woman for your wedded wife, he said, 'Will you take this little beast for your wife.'

"When Larro answered this question with a loud and emphatic 'I will!' behold! no mouse was there. It had disappeared, and in its place stood a beautiful young woman, whose face was lighted with happiness. The magistrate was so dumfounded that he dropped his book, and stared with astonishment. Then the beautiful young woman, who was no other than the Princess Geraldine, ran and embraced her father. In the midst of the wonder and astonishment, only the Princess was calm. She looked around for Larro, but he was no longer where she had left him; and, just then, she caught a glimpse of him as he went along a corridor to the palace entrance. With no thought of her position, or the dignity which it demanded, the Princess ran after Larro, and insisted on his returning with her. They went to the Prince

hand-in-hand, and kneeled before him as if to ask his blessing.

"Then the Princess, still holding Larro's hand, led him before the magistrate. By the time that flustrated dignitary had recovered his gravity, the Princess said to him very sweetly, 'I pray you, sir, go on with the ceremony; as it stands, it is a one-sided affair.' The magistrate looked at the Prince and then at the Princess, as if in doubt; and then he cleared his throat, and put the question to the Princess, who replied with an 'I will!' as emphatic as that of Larro.

"It might be supposed that this marriage of the Princess to a peasant would have been unpopular; but it was not so. There were a few who sneered at it, but the great body of the people approved it; and they begun to regard their Prince with an interest and affection that they had not felt before. In the end, it was the means of serving the kingdom, for when a neighbouring king marched into their country, all the people who could bear arms rallied around their peasant general, as Larro was called, and captured the opposing army."

The princess insists that Larro return to finish the ceremony.

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There was silence for a little while, and then Wally Wanderoon pretended to wake up with a snort. "Are you finished?" he asked. "Are you right certain that you didn't leave out sixty or seventy chapters? We'd like to have it all."

"Not me!" exclaimed Drusilla. "Nuff's nuff, an' too much is a plenty."

"Why, I thought it was pretty good," said Sweetest Susan.

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed the story-teller in a weak voice; "thank you very much!"

"You'd better rest yourself now," said Wally Wanderoon. "I expected every minute to hear you fetch a gasp and expire. The tale is like a spider's web; it's all over the trees and bushes, and flying in the air. The hank of yarn you had in one part of it aint a circumstance to the story itself. I hope you'll feel better after a while."

"Well, I thought you liked old-fashioned stories, and that is the way they used to be told when people had plenty of time to listen. Those who are in a hurry, or who have business to attend to, can't enjoy a good story. That's my experience."

"It may be so," remarked Wally Wanderoon, "but in my opinion a short and snappy story is enjoyed by those who have time, as well as by those who are in a hurry."

Wally Wanderoon looked at Drusilla as much as to say, "Suppose you try your hand?" At least that was the interpretation the negro girl gave to his glance. "You nee'nter look at me dataway, I aint no tale-teller. Set me down befo' a pot er greens, an' I'll show you what eatin' is, but I can't tell no tale des dry so."

"You used to remember a good many," said Sweetest Susan.

"Why, she can tell you fifty," declared Buster John, "when you don't want to hear them. But if she thinks you want to hear them, she wouldn't tell you one to save your life."

"Does I do dataway sho nuff?" inquired Drusilla, laughing gleefully.

"Yes—and you think it's mighty smart," replied Buster John.

"As for me," remarked Wally Wanderoon, "I have no particular appetite for stories to-day. Those

that I have heard are so mortally poor that I think I could go on for years and never want to hear another."

"Well, I bet you I kin tell one dat you'd like ter hear; an' 'taint no nigger tale nother. My gran'-mammy tole it ter me, an' she said she got it fum de white folks."

"What is it?" inquired Wally Wanderoon. "Don't keep us waiting."

"I'll do my best, an' dat's all I kin do," remarked Drusilla. "I can't tell it like my gran'mammy, kaze she sot up nights, ol' ez she wuz, an' tol' tales ef she could git anybody ter lis'n at her. But me—ef I sot up I nodded, an' when dat's de case, what you gwine-ter do?"

"Why, we are going to listen to your story whenever you get in the humour to tell it," said Wally Wanderoon.

Drusilla picked at her frock a moment, as if trying to recall some of the incidents of the story, and then began.

IX

THE BOY AND THE KING

"ONE time dey wuz a man what had sech a big fambly dat he wuz hard pushed fer ter feed um all. He had thirteen chillun, an' de biggest wan't mo'n fifteen. Dey wuz so many un um dat dey took turns at gwine ter bed hongry, an' den, bimeby, dey come a bad crop year. De season wuz so dry dat dey can't even raise 'taters. Dey scuffled 'long de best dey could, but it got so atter so long a time dat sump'n gotter be done, an' de oldest boy, he up an' say dat he gwine some'rs whar he kin arn his livin' an' maybe he'p his daddy an' mammy.

"Well, dey wuz great gwine-ons when de time come fer him ter go 'way. Dey all cried an' cried an' cried, tell it look like dey wuz gwineter cry der eyes out. Ef you'll take notice, poor folks like der famblies a heap better dan what rich folks does. Anyhow, dat's what my granny say, an' she sho did know,

kaze she wuz mighty nigh a hunderd year ol', an' she had seed sights in her day an' time.

"Dish yer boy wuz name Mack Sump'n er Nother, —I done fergot what,—so I'll des call 'im plain Mack, an' let it go at dat. 'Taint gwineter hurt 'im, kaze he done dead by dis time; my granny say he done kick loose fum his troubles long 'fo' I wuz born. Well, dish yer Mack, he got tired er eatin' half-rashuns, an' w'arin' his daddy's ol' cloze, sech ez dey wuz. So one day, when dey wuz all settin' roun' de fire, tryin' ter keep fum freezin', he up an' 'lowed dat he wuz gwine ter start right den an' dar an' see ef he can't make his livin'. Dey ax 'im whar he gwine. He say he dunner no mo' whar he gwine dan de bird in de tree; all he know wuz dat he wuz gwine. Den he ax his mammy fer ter pack up what few duds he got so he kin make a soon start de nex' mornin'.

"Well, de mammy, she packed up de duds, cryin' all de time. She put um in a bag, an' inter de bag she slipped a few taters, an' a little rasher er bacon, not mo'n nuff fer ter last a hongry man five minnits. An' dat ar Mack, stidder waitin' tell nex' mornin' like he say he gwineter do, slung his bag on his back,

got his walkin'-cane, an' put off down de road like sump'n wuz atter him; he didn't wanter tell um all good-bye. But when dey fin' out dat he done gone, I bet you dey wuz wheepin' an' whalin' in dat house—ef you kin call it a house.

" Whiles all dis wuz gwine on, Mack, he wuz polin' down de big road. Ef he didn't cry it wuz kaze he aint got no pocket hankcher. He went on, he did, an' bimeby he come ter de place whar de road forked. He knowed dat one er de roads led ter de town, kaze he had been dar wid his daddy, but whar de yuther road led he didn't no mo' know dan de man in de moon —ef dey's any man dar. He stopped, he did, an' study; an' whiles he studyin', he got a notion dat some un wuz talkin' ter 'im. Den he look all 'roun', an' dar under a tree wuz a little ol' man. He wuz bareheaded an' barefooted, an' he aint got no coat.

" Dar he stood shiver'n' an' shakin' under de tree. Den Mack was mightly holp up, kaze dar wuz a man wuss off dan what he wuz—colder an' hongrier an' nakeder, an' he never spected fer ter see sech a sight. De little ol' man 'low, ' My head col'; loan me yo' hat.' Mack say, ' It aint much uv er hat, but what dey is

un it youer mo' dan welcome ter.' De little ol' man say, 'My body col'; loan me yo' coat.' Mack 'low, 'Ef my coat 'll keep you warm, it's mo' dan it's done fer me; but youer mo' dan welcome ter it.' De little ol' man say, 'My foots is col'; loan me yo' shoes.' Mack 'low, 'Take um; if dey keep yo' foots warm, it 'll be mo' dan what dey've done fer me.' De little ol' man say, 'I'm hongry; gi' me what vittles you got.' Mack 'low, 'It's little nuff, but I speck it 'll do you mo' good dan what it will me,' an' wid dat, he gun del little ol' man all de vittles he had 'cep' one piece er bread.

"Den he ax de man what road he shill take, an' de man say, 'Luck is allers close ter de left han'.' So Mack tuck de left-han' road, an' he went along barefooted, bareheaded, an' wid no coat fer ter keep de col' out. He went 'long tell he gun ter git hongry, an' bimeby he sot down on a log by de side er de road, an' munched his piece er bread.

"He aint been settin' dar long 'fo' he hear a noise, an' when he look 'roun', dar wuz de little ol' man settin' on de yuther een' er de log. He wuz all drawed up an' swivelled, but he had a big bundle in his han',

an' he wuz des es chipper ez a jay-bird. He giggled like he wuz mighty nigh tickled ter death. Mack aint say nothin', but he look at de man mighty hard. Bimeby, when de little ol' man got over his gigglin' spell, he look at Mack an' 'low, 'Now den, young man, you done gi' me purty nigh eve'ything you had, an' now I'm gwine ter pay you back. Take dish yer bundle an' open it.'

"So said, so done. Mack opened de bundle, an' dar wuz a good suit er cloze, a nice pair er shoes, an' a hat; an' dey wuz all bran' new. Mack went in de bushes an' put um on, an' when he come back, you wouldn' hardly 'a' knowed him, he looked so fine an' clean. He said thanky-do ter de man, an' made his best bow. Den de man gi' 'im a ring. He 'low, he did, dat de ring wuz too big fer Mack's biggest finger, but anyhow, he must keep it on his finger, kaze ef he lose it, he'll be onlucky; but ef he don't lose it, an' keep it on his finger—de big finger er his left han'—he kin do anything he try ter do.

"Mack look at de ring, an' try it on, an' when he turn 'roun fer ter say thanky ter de little ol' man, dey wan't nobody dar. He look an' look, but dey

The little old man appears again.

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aint nobody in sight, an' it make 'im feel mighty quare, kaze he aint been use ter folks fadin' away right befo' his eyes. He picked up his foots, an' I bet you he got away fum dar.

" He went on an' went on, an' bimeby, atter so long a time, he come inter a new country, an' in dat country he hear 'bout de quare doin's er de King. Some say he had mo' sense dan what any yuther King had, an' some say he wuz start-naked crazy. Mack lis'en at all dis talk, but he aint say nothin'. When dey ax 'im 'bout de King, he say he don't know de King, an' de King don't know him. Den dey say dat he de ve'y man fer ter settle a 'spute what dey been havin', an' den dey ax 'im what he think uv a King what wanter gi' his daughter ter de man what kin clean out his stable, an' sweep out his back yard, an' fill up de dry well.

" Mack ax ef anybody is ever tried fer ter do all dis. Dey say dat hunderds er folks is tried, an' come 'way widout doin' one er de yuther. Den Mack 'low, he did, dat de King is smart man, kase he huntin' fer somebody what kin do better dan anybody else, an' he say he gwinter take de job, an' see ef he can't

show de King how ter clean up things at his house.

"Well, de word went round dat a young man fum a fur country is gwinter try his han' at cleanin' out de place whar de King done his kingin', an' bimeby it come ter de year er de King, an' he des lay back on his th'one, an' laughed tell he can't laugh no mo'; an' den he call in his daughter an' tol' her dat dey wuz another fool comin' fer ter clean out his stable. He broke out in a hoss laugh, but de gal, she aint see de joke dis time. She sot dar an' twis' her apern string, an' vow dat she aint gwineter play no sech game; she 'low dat bimeby some good-fer-nothin' 'll come an' do what nobody else can't do, an' den she'll hatter marry 'im whedder er no. She say she done make up her min' what ter do, an' she gwineter do it.

"So she went an' fix herself up like one er de poor folks. She shucked her silk duds, an' all her fine cloze, an' come out'n her room lookin' fer all de worl' like she b'longded ter de poor white trash, an' when Mack come walkin' up ter de house whar de kingin' wuz done, she wuz walkin' 'roun' de yard barefooted,

an' her cloze looked like dey had been fished outer de rag-bag.

"Mack say howdy, an' tuck off his hat. De gal 'low, 'You couldn't do no mo' ef I wuz de King's daughter.' Mack say, 'I bet youer lots purtier dan what de King's daughter is.' De gal make answer, 'I aint no purtier, an' I aint got no fine cloze like de King's daughter. What you want 'roun' here, anyhow?' Mack 'low, 'I may want you 'fo' I git thoo, but what I want right now is fer somebody ter run an' tell de King dat dey's a man out here what want ter do some cleanin' fer 'im.' De gal went 'roun' de back way, an' bimeby somebody come ter de door, an' ax Mack what he want. Mack say he des wanter do some cleanin' fer de King. Some un done tol' 'im, he say, dat de King want his stable cleaned out, an' his back yard swep'. De door-keeper run an' tol' de King, an' he tol' um fer ter show de fool in.

"So Mack, he went in whar de King wuz, an' he seed mo' fine doin's dan he ever see befo' in all his born days. He mired up in de kyarpits, an' come mighty nigh walkin' headfo'most in a big lookin'-glass on de wall. 'Bout dat time he gun ter feel shaky, an' he

got de idee dat maybe he'd come ter de wrong place. But he helt up his head, an' make like he been use ter dat kinder doin's all his life. Bimeby, de house gal come an' tol' 'im dat de King 'd see 'im, an' she showed 'im inter a great big room dat look like it 'd hol' a hunderd folks, an' up on a flatform sot de King. He had his hankcher on his mouf fer ter keep fum laughin', an' eve'y once in a while he'd mighty nigh strangle hisse'f wid coughin'.

"Mack tol' him howdy ez perlite ez he could, an' bowed ez low ez he knowed how. Den he tol' de King dat he hear talk dat he had a job er cleanin' he want done. De King say dat de folks what tol' 'im dat aint tell no lie; an' den he went on ter say dat he been tryin' fer de longest fer ter git somebody what kin clean out his stable, sweep his back yard, an' fill a dry well. Mack 'low dat he'll try ter do de best he kin.

"So de King ter make sho er de matter tol' 'im dat ef he done de job, he mought marry his daughter, an' ef he can't do de job, he'll hatter go ter jail fer a spell, an' den he sont fer de carriage-driver, an' tol' 'im ter show de young man whar de stable is. Dey aint no

two ways about it, Mack wuz feelin' shaky, an' ef he could 'a' backed out er doin' de job, he wouldn't 'a' gone nigh de stable, but dar he wuz an' he couldn't git out'n it. He looked in de stable, an' it wuz mighty nigh chock full er dirt an' straw. But he shucked his coat, an' got 'im a spade an' went ter work.

"Now den, when Mack tuck off his coat, his ring drapped on de groun' close by, but he aint miss it. He des grabbed de spade, an' went ter work, but fer eve'y shovel full he th'owed out, seven shovels full come in ag'in. He worked on a while, wonderin' how high de jail wuz, an' den all uv a sudden he missed his ring. He knowed he had it on when he went ter pull off his coat, an' so he hunted 'bout fer it, an' bimeby he foun' it. Dis make 'im feel better.

"Bout dat time de gal what he seed in de front yard er de King's house come santerin' long, an' ax 'im how he gittin' long. Mack say he gittin' long purty well in spite er de conjerments. Den de gal tell 'im dat he'll hatter marry de King's daughter ef he do all dat he sot out ter do; but Mack, he say, he did, dat he'll not marry de King's daughter while de

gal he wuz talkin' wid wuz on top er de groun'. Dis make de gal blush, an' she ax 'im how come he'd ruther marry her dan ter marry de King's daughter, an' Mack up an' say dat he done seed her, an' he aint never seed de King's daughter. Den de gal say, 'Spozen she lots purtier dan what I is?'

"Mack 'low, he did, dat she kin keep her purty fer some un else. Den he tell de gal dat he'll marry her ef she'll have 'im, but she say she aint nothin' but a house gal, an' she don't wanter stan' in his way, kaze he mought be sorry he married her stidder de King's daughter. But Mack say he aint gwineter have it dataway. De gal aint say nothin' ter dis, but she look mighty willin'.

"Den Mack, wid his ring on his finger, went ter work cleanin' out de stable, an' de way he make de trash an' dirt fly wuz a plum sight ter see. De gal say, 'Yon' come de King,' an' den she made herse'f skace. Well, de King come up, he did, an' he wuz so 'stonished dat he can't say nothin'. De dirt an' straw come flyin' out like it wuz run thoo a th'ashin' machine, an' ef he hadn't 'a' jumped out'n de way, 'twould 'a' kivvered him plum up, kaze eve'y time

Mack 'ud fling out one shovel full, 'lev'm mo' would jump up an' foller atter.

"De stable wuz cleaned out whiles de King wuz stan'in' dar wid his mouf open, an' when Mack come out, he look des ez fresh ez ef he hadn't done no work. De King, he 'low, 'I speck you'll git my daughter,' but Mack, he say he des done de job fer fun, kaze he got his eye on 'nother gal. De King 'low, 'You mean de gal what wuz here des now?' Mack say, 'Yasser.' De King sorter grinned, but he aint let on.

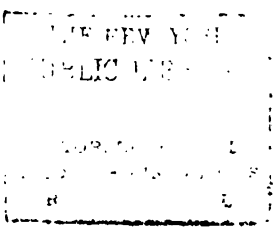
"Den Mack ax 'im wharbouts de dry well is, an' de King make answer dat it's right dar close ter de stable, an' sho nuff, dar 'twuz, an' it look like it wuz in about a mile deep. De King, he went on back ter de house whar he do his kingin' at, an' Mack, he whirled in fer ter fill up de dry well. It look like de dirt what he tuck fum de stable des went an' got in de dry well by itse'f, kaze when he flung one shovel full in, forty wheelbarrows full would foller atter an' fall in de well. An' 'twant ten minnits 'fo' de well wuz full up ter de top.

"Mack went on up ter de house, an' de King, settin' on de porch, seed 'im. He 'low, 'I speck de

well wuz too much fer you.' Mack say, 'No sirree; I fulled it up wid de dirt I flung out'n de stable. 'Twant no trouble 'tall. De King look at 'im right hard an' say, 'Looky here, young man, what kinder chap is you, anyhow?' Mack 'low, 'I'm des a common eve'yday chap what aint skeered er work. What I does I does so easy dat I don't charge nothin' fer it.' De King say, 'Well, dar's de back yard an' de front yard fer ter clean up.' Mack 'low, 'I lay off ter do dat ter-night when de dus' won't bodder nobody.'

"At dat, de King laugh loud an' laugh long. Mack say, 'You must sholy be tickled.' Dis make de King laugh louder dan ever, an' Mack went off an' sot down in de shade an' wondered what make de King laugh so hard. He sot dar, he did, tell he got ter noddin', an' den he fell sound ersleep. Whiles he wuz sno'in', de gal come out ter see wharbouts he wuz. 'Twant long 'fo' she foun' 'im, an' den she stood lookin' at 'im, kinder smilin' ter herse'f. When her eye fell on de ring, she flung back her head an' grinned. She thought ter herse'f dat he gwineter marry her anyhow, an' 'twouldn't be no harm fer ter take de ring onbeknownst ter 'im. So she crope up,

Mack at work in the stable.



easy ez she kin, an' slipped de ring off'n his finger, an' went flyin' ter de house.

" Atter so long a time, Mack woke up, an' missed his ring, an' right den an' dar he had sho nuff trouble in his min'. He aint got no idee whar de ring is. He knowed he had it on when he sot down dar, an' he couldn't make out what had gone wid it. Bimeby, de gal come out fer ter see ef he wuz wake, an' what he gwineter say 'bout his ring—you know how gals is. Well, out she come, but Mack, stidder talkin' 'bout his ring, tol' de gal dat he'd hatter go back home. He done had a dream dat his mammy wuz sick, an' while he'd like ter stay on 'count er de gal, he wuz bleeze ter go back home.

" De gal look sollum when she hear dis kinder news, an' when she talk she had a kinder ketch in her goozle. She say, ' I'm mighty sorry you gwine, atter what you tol' me, but ef you gwine you better not tell de King.' Den she look at his han' an' say, ' Law! whar yo' fine ring? ' Mack 'low, ' I done lost it, an' I can't fin' it nowhar. Dat ring wuz my fortune; I can't no nothin' widout it. I laid off fer ter gi' you de ring what my mammy gi' me when I started on my journey,

but 'taint no use now; wid my good-luck ring gone, I can't never hope ter git you.' De gal say, 'When you gwineter start?' an' he 'low dat he gwineter make tracks fum dar des ez soon ez night come.

"De gal say she mighty sorry, an' Mack say she can't be half ez sorry ez he wuz, an' not nigh ez lonesome. De gal sorter stood 'roun', waitin' fer Mack ter say sump'n, but he wuz feelin' too bad; he des hung his head an' sot dar wid his mouf shot. Den de gal ax 'im not ter go tell he see her, an' he promise dat he won't ef he kin see her 'fo' night.

"Well, des 'fo' night fell, here come de gal wid de ring. She aint tell no tale 'bout it; she des up'n say dat she tuck it kaze she wanted it. She 'low, 'Atter what you said down yonder in de hoss-lot, I felt like I had ez good a right ter dat ring ez any udder gal—an' dat's why I tuck it. Mack say he aint blamin' her one bit, not one grain, an' she look so nice when he say it dat Mack feel his heart go flippity-flop. She come up close ter him when she gi' 'im de ring, an' put her han' on his, an' 'twuz sech a saft little han' he can't he'p squeezin' it a little bit. But when he went ter put his arm 'roun' her, she

broke away fum 'im an' run in de house des like she oughter done, kaze she'd been raise' right, an' knowed what she wuz doin'.

" When night come, Mack got 'im a big brush-broom, an' started ter sweep de trash an' dirt out'n de yard. He seed 'fo' de sun went down how bad it needed cleanin', an' he say ter hisse'f dat he don't wanter marry de King's daughter ef she aint no better housekeeper dan ter let de front an' back yard stay lookin' like dat. He skacely knowed whar ter begin at, but when he did start in, a high wind come up an' blowed de dirt an' trash 'way ez fast ez he kin raise it wid his brush-broom; an' bimeby he aint had ter sweep 'tall, kaze de win' got stronger an' stronger, an' it des pick up de trash an' de dust an' tuck it clean away.

" De King, he hear de wind, he did, an' he ax what all dat noise is. His daughter say it's his son-in-law doin' work dat he aint got no business ter do. De King say it's a big storm comin' up, an' de gal 'low dat her sweet'art done called on Brer Wind fer ter he'p 'im sweep de yard.

" De King had de idee dat his daughter wuz gittin'

mighty uppity, but he aint say nothin'. He des went inter his room an' shucked off his duds, an' went ter bed; but de gal crope ter her winder, atter puttin' out de light, an' looked out. By dat time, Mack had done finish de job, an' de yard wuz clean ez de floor er de house whar de King live at. Den de gal, she went ter bed an' dremp dreams dat she aint never dremp befo'.

"De nex' mornin' de King sont out an' ax Mack fer ter come inter brekkus, but Mack make answer dat he done had his brekkus too long ter talk about. Dem what do de kingin' don't hatter git up soon in de mornin', an' dey eats der brekkus late. Dish yer King what I'm a-tellin' you 'bout wan't no better dan any er de rest un um. He had late brekkus, an' he put on airs, an' sassed eve'ybody when he feel like it. But he come out atter while, an' he come mighty nigh faintin' when he seed how clean bofe his yards wuz.

"He 'low, 'Whar did you pile de trash?' Mack say dat he don't b'lieve in doin' no half-way job, so he tuck'n tuck de trash off whar 'twon't pester nobody no mo'. Dis make de King scratch his head. He

bleeze ter stan' up ter his promise, an' so he ax Mack in de house whar he do his kingin' at, an' ax 'im fer ter take a seat an' make hisse'f comf'tubble. Den de King clum up on his th'one, an' sont out fer his majers an' his cap'ns, an' a whole lot er yuther folks what he knowed right well. When dey all come, de King 'low dat he done promise fer ter gi' his daughter ter de man what kin clean out his stable, fill de dry well, an' sweep de front an' back yard. 'All er you-all done try it an' can't do it,' de King say, 'an a whole passel of folks fum way off yon', an' dey aint none un um kin do it but dish yer young man fum de country. I got ter keep my promise,' de King say.

"Wid dat dey all hung der heads 'cep' Mack. He des sot dar thinkin' how he kin tell de King dat he don't want his daughter widout makin' 'im blazin' mad. Bimeby he gun ter think 'bout de yuther gal, an' he got right up an' tol' de king dat he aint charge 'im nothin' fer what he done, kaze he done gi' his promise ter 'nother gal.

"Dey all look at 'im like dey think he done lose his min'. De King say dat his daughter is mighty nice gal, an' dat Mack will sho like her. Mack say

he don't 'spute dat, kaze wid sech a nice daddy, she can't he'p bein' nice. De King 'low dat Mack had better see her befo' he 'fuse ter have her. Mack say he'll be mighty glad ter see her, but he done make his promise to 'nother gal. Wid dat de King sont fer his daughter, an' when she come in, Mack seed dat she want nobody but de gal what he done strucken wid."

"Is that all?" asked Sweetest Susan.

"'Taint half," replied Drusilla. "Ef I wuz ter tell you all dat Mack done wid dat ring, I'd keep you here a week er mo'."

"That tale," remarked the professional story-teller, "is evidently a Gaelic legend, and it shows——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "We don't care what is shows, so long as it is a tale. It is too short to tire anybody, and that is more than can be said for some tales I have heard—if you'll excuse my frankness."

"I see you have taken up the idea that I can't tell a short tale," said the professional story-teller. "My views are different. I am certain I can shorten

them to any length that suits you. The only reason I spin them out is to satisfy the demands of art."

"More nonsense!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "What does a parcel of boys and girls care about what you call art? If you make your stories short enough, and give them pith and point, you'll do well enough. Just tell the story for its own sake, and let the art take care of itself. Aint that so?" he asked turning to Drusilla.

"I dunner no mo' what you talkin' 'bout dan de rest er de chillun. But I bet you I know a tale dat none un you aint never hear tell un, less'n you lived wid coloured folks. Dey won't tell it ter nobody dat dey don't like, an' dat don't like dem."

"Haven't I heard it?" Buster John asked.

"I don't speck you is," replied Drusilla, "kaze it's kinder tetchous. De coloured folks aint got no call fer ter tell it ter white chillun, kaze when de chillun grows up dey'll tell it 'roun', an' den eve'ybody 'll know why de niggers is black."

"Well, why do you want to talk about it now?" Buster John asked somewhat loftily.

"Kaze we er free now, an' 'taint no use fer ter keep it hid," Drusilla answered.

"Then please tell it and be quick about it," said Sweetest Susan, "because it is time to go. Mr. Bobbs will think that little Billy Biscuit is lost."

"Well, ef we all aint los', I dunno de reason," remarked Drusilla.

"Let us have the tale," said the professional story-teller. "I venture to say I can give a shrewd guess as to its origin."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "There you go again."

Drusilla reflected a moment, as if trying to get the thread of the story straight, and then began.

X

THE SUN TAKES HOLIDAY

"YOU know how ol' de Sun is," she said by way of introduction. "Well, he'd been hangin' up dar in de sky so long dat he got tired, an' dey come a time when he want ter know what kinder folks he wuz makin' light fer. Long ez he been up dar, an' bright ez he shine, he aint never got 'quainted wid dem what he shine fer, an' so de time come when de Sun feel like he des bleeze ter see how eve'ything gittin' on down here whar folks live at.

"Dey wan't nothin' ter do but ter make 'rangements fer some un fer ter keep house whiles he gone. He made inquirements, an' foun' dat de Moon aint got nothin' ter do in de daytime, an' de Sun ax 'er ef she won't be so good ez ter take his place fer one day, an' de Moon say she'll be glad fer ter 'commerdate de Sun.

"Well, dey fix 'pon a day, an' when de time come,

dar wuz de Moon, ready fer business. So de Sun tol' her good-bye, an' swung hisse'f down ter de groun'. Dey wan't nothin' like de Sun spected ter fin' it, an' he aint like de look er things. He walked aroun' right smart, an' bimeby he got tired an' sot down by de side er de road fer ter rest. He sot dar, he did, kinder dozin' an' wonderin' how come de worl' aint no better dan what 'tis, an' bimeby he fell soun' asleep.

" Now de folks an' de creeturs wuz 'stonished kaze de Sun sot so soon dat day. De folks' wuz a-workin' in de fiel's an' a-jowerin' in der houses, an' de creeturs wuz a-cavortin' in de woods an' swamps, when, fust thing dey knowed, de Sun quit shinin' an' de moon come out. Well, dey all scooted ter cover, kaze dey aint know what ter make er dat kinder doin's. Some er de ol' wimmen put on der specks, an' tuck de almanac off'n de nail whar 'twuz hangin', an' hunted about in it fer ter see what all dis mean; but dey aint fin' nothin' in de book, an' all dey kin do is ter vow an' declar' dat dey aint never seed de beat er dat sence dey been borned inter de worl'.

" Now, whiles de Sun settin' dar fast asleep, here

The sun takes part of a day off and comes down early.

LENOX ANL

come a man polin' 'long, an' what should de man do but run headfo'most right inter de Sun. Dis wake 'im up, an' he say ter de man dat fer what he done he got ter stay black all his born days, him an' his fambly, an' all de balance er his tribe, an' all er dem what come atter 'im. De Sun say, 'You aint only is ter be black, but you'll hatter work hard all day, an' walk fur at night'; an' fum dat day ter dis, all dat man's kinnery is been black, an' dey work hard all day, an' walk fur at night.

"Den, whiles de Sun wuz tryin' his best fer ter git over his mad fit, here come de white fox an' run right over 'im, an' fum dat day ter dis, foxes, bofe red an' grey, is got black legs, an' dey look like dey been singe. De Sun call de fox back and pass a law on him dat he got ter walk at night an' hide in de day time, an' be skeered ter death fum one year's een' ter de yuther.

"All dis fuss wuz mo' dan de Sun had bargained fer, an' he 'low ter hisse'f dat he better skin out home 'fo' he git knock ter pieces by sump'n er 'nother. So he went back ter de place whar he live at. De Moon wan't spectin' 'im, but she wuz mo' dan glad dat he

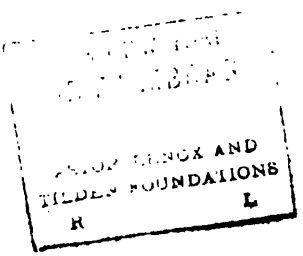
come. She say dat she don't like dis way er shinin' in de daytime, kaze she can't dodge de comics an' de fallin' stars. When de Sun look at her he bleeze ter laugh, kaze her face wuz all swell up, an' looked black an' blue. Ef you look right close you'll see de marks what she got on her face fum bein' hit wid de fallin' stars. De marks is dar, an' dar dey'll stay. Now, dat's all I know 'bout it."

"That is short and sweet, as the woodpecker said to the worm," remarked Wally Wanderoon, "and it accounts for a good many things."

"It is the queerest mixture of folklore," said the professional story-teller, "that I have ever come across. There is something like it among the Kaffirs, and—let me see——"

"There you go again!" exclaimed Wally Wanderoon. "I declare I never saw such an obstinate, such a hard-headed person. What under the sun do these children care about the Kaffirs? Wait until the youngest is fifty-odd years old, and then tell them about folklore, and the Kaffirs, and what not."

The white fox and the Sun.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"I've no doubt I'll be dead by that time," remarked the professional story-teller with a sigh.

"And you think you'll have no successors," said Wally Wanderoon. "Well, I wouldn't cry about a little thing like that. Queer as it may seem, you'll have plenty—and some of them worse than you are."

"I dunner what he talkin' 'bout," said Drusilla, "but ef he fool wid me, I'll whirl in an' tell 'im sump'n he aint never hear tell un."

"I'd thank you kindly," the professional story-teller declared.

"Is you ever hear talk er Brer Rabbit an' de Bee?" Drusilla's tone was slightly snappish, for she had a dim idea that the story-teller had commented unfavourably on the tale she had told.

"Brother Rabbit and the Bee—I don't think I ever did," replied the man in the box. "But it promises well. Brother Rabbit and the Bee—that is a good title."

"Title!" protested Drusilla. "What you call it dat fer? 'Taint no title; it's des a plain eve'yday tale."

"Oh, do tell it, Drusilla!" cried Sweetest Susan. "I've heard you tell it once, but I have forgotten it."

"Dat aint sayin' much fer de tale," responded Drusilla. "'Taint much, but it's better dan dem what you-all been tellin'. Thereupon Drusilla began to pick her finger-nails, a sure sign of embarrassment. Presently she began and told the story of

XI

BROTHER RABBIT AND THE BEE

"DEY wuz a time when Brer Rabbit had a mighty habit er chawin' sweetgum. Day in an' day out, no matter whar you seed 'im, his jaw would be a-workin', an' 'twan't no cud dat he had; it wuz des plain sweetgum. Ef he fail ter fin' it fresh ter his han', he'd bark de fust sweetgum tree he come ter an' den go back dar in a day or two, an' git de truck what done ooze out at de place whar he gnyawed de bark off. He done dis so much dat all his fambly, an' der famblies atter 'em, down ter dis day an' time, done got in de habits er workin' der jaws, an' barkin' most eve'y tree dey come ter. Dey done fergit all 'bout de sweetgum, yit dat aint hender um fum workin' der jaws an' barkin' trees.

"Well, one day, whiles Brer Rabbit wuz takin' a walk in de woods fer ter git de fresh air, he run 'cross a great big sweetgum tree. Some un had strip

de bark fum one side, an' it wuz fair reekin' wid sweetgum—not de yaller sort dat burns yo' mouf, but de white kind dat tas'es good. When Brer Rabbit see all dis, he make up his min' dat he'll git his fill er sweetgum fer one time, an' take some ter de ol' 'oman an' de chillun.

"Brer Rabbit feel so good, he did, dat he tuck off his hat an' sot it on de side er his head, an' strut up ter de sweetgum tree, an' rap on de bark like he knockin' at de door. He start ter say, 'Howdy, eve'ybody!' but 'fo' he kin git de words out'n his mouf, he jerk his han' 'way fum de tree, an' fetched a squall dat mought er been heard a mile. He done des like de tree burn him, but 'twan't no burn; 'twuz des a Bee, an' a mighty little un at dat—one er deze yer kind what w'ars black striped britches.

"Brer Rabbit say, 'What you want ter stob me wid yo' knife fer?' Mr. Bee 'low, 'What you mash me fer?' Brer Rabbit say he aint see de Bee tell atter he got stobbed. Mr. Bee 'low, 'You see me now, don't you?' Brer Rabbit say, 'I feels you lots wuss dan I sees you. Whyn't you holler 'fo' you jab me wid yo' knife?' Mr. Bee say, 'How kin anybody

holler when dey git de breff knock out'n um? You got heels an' I got wings, but when I gits a load er goody-goody, I can't use my wings so free, an' den I'm bleeze ter pull out my knife.'

"Brer Rabbit han' hurt 'im so bad whar he got stung at, an' he make so much fuss 'bout it, dat Mr. Bee tol' 'im he kin kyo it by puttin' some year-wax on it, an' sho nuff de stingded place quit hurtin' when Brer Rabbit greased it wid some wax out'n his year. Den he got 'im a great big chaw er sweetgum, nuff fer ter last 'im a week, an' he got a whole lot mo' an' put it on a big poplar leaf an' say he gwineter take it ter his ol' 'oman an' de chillun.

"All dis time de Bee wuz settin' right whar he wuz when Brer Rabbit hurt 'im. Brer Rabbit say, 'Heyo! aint you gone yit?' and Mr. Bee say he feelin' so bad an' weak dat he dunner whe'r he kin git home er not. Brer Rabbit 'low he mighty sorry, an' ax ef he can't do sump'n fer ter he'p 'im."

"Why, bees die when they sting anything," said Buster John. "I heard Grandfather say so."

"Well an' good," replied Drusilla, with a triumphant toss of her head. "You hear me talkin'

ez hard ez I kin; now, den, des lis'n at me whiles I tells de tale—ef you kin call it a tale. Wharbouts wuz I?"

"Where Brother Rabbit was asking Mr. Bee if he couldn't do something to help him," said Sweetest Susan.

"Well, den," remarked Drusilla, "when Brer Rabbit ax 'im dat, Mr. Bee say he mighty much erbleeged. He hate might'ly fer ter pester Brer Rabbit, he say, but ef he'll be so good ez ter take 'im back ter de big poplar tree, whar he live at, he'll be mo' dan thankful. So Mr. Bee say, an' no sooner do he say it, dan Brer Rabbit helt out de poplar leaf what got de sweetgum on it, an' Mr. Bee crawled on it. Den, atter Mr. Bee tell 'im which way ter go, Brer Rabbit went wid a hop, skip, an' a jump, an' dough de big tree whar Mr. Bee live at wuz a mighty fur ways, 'twant long 'fo' dey got dar.

"De door er Mr. Bee's house wan't so mighty fur fum de groun', an' when his fambly hear some un knockin' dar, dey swarm out fer ter see what de trouble wuz, an' no sooner is dey come out, dan dey see Brer Rabbit wid de sick Bee, an' whiles dey wuz

Brer Rabbit brings the bee home.

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mighty sorry fer ter see one er der fambly in a bad way, dey wuz mighty glad ter know dat Brer Rabbit wuz good nuff fer ter fetch 'im home; an' dey say dat dey aint nothin' in der house too good fer 'im.

"Brer Rabbit thank um kindly, an' say he aint done no mo' dan what he'd speck some un ter do fer him—not dat he spected any an' eve'ybody ter do it, kaze dar wuz Brer Fox, what had been er pursuin' on atter him an' his fambly sence de year One. Den all de bees, der sisters an' der brers, say dat dey wish dey'd er know'd it long 'fo' dis, kaze dey'd 'a' made it hot fer Brer Fox.

"Brer Rabbit say dey may have a visit fum Brer Fox dat ve'y day er de day atter, kaze he done hear Brer Fox say dat he know whar dey wuz a bee tree, an' dat he wuz gwineter git some er de honey. Den de Bees sorter lif' der wings an' strut 'roun' an' say dey hope he'll come ter der house.

"Whiles dey wuz jawin' wid one an'er, some un um crawled on Brer Rabbit, an' when he flinched dey ax 'im what de matter. Brer Rabbit 'low, he did, dat he wuz born ticklish an' he'd die ticklish, an' dey'd hatter scuzen 'im. Bees got lots mo' sense dan folks,

an' soon ez dey fin' out dat Brer Rabbit is ticklish, dey gun ter play pranks on 'im. Dey'd zoon 'roun' his head, an' light on his years, an' dey kep' dat up tell Brer Rabbit can't do nothin' but dodge, fus' dis way an' den dat, an' de mo' he dodge, de wuss de Bees got, an' he des bleeze ter tell um good-bye.

"Dey foller'd 'im a little piece, de Bees did, des fer de fun er de thing, but bimeby dey turn 'roun' an' went back home. Dey aint no sooner do dis dan here come Brer Fox prancin' thoo de woods wid—'Howdy, Brer Rabbit! howdy!' an' 'Whar you been dis long time, an' how's yo' fambly, an' all de chillun?' Brer Rabbit say dey aint doin' so mighty well, an' den he ax Brer Fox how his folks is. Brer Fox say dey er des natchally scrumptious, fat ez butter, an' happy ez de day's long. Brer Rabbit say he monst'us glad ter hear sech good news.

"Den Brer Fox say, 'Whar you bin, Brer Rabbit, an' whar you git so much nice sweetgum?' Brer Rabbit 'low, he did, dat he got it at de gittin' place, which it wuzn't so mighty fur off. Brer Fox ax 'im whar de place wuz, an' Brer Rabbit 'low dat ef Brer Fox 'll make like he's a runnin' atter 'im, he'll show

'im de place. 'When we come ter de place,' Brer Rabbit say, 'I'll whirl short ter de left, an' den all you got ter do is go ter de big tree whar de Bees live at, an' knock on de door wid yo' cane an' tell um fer ter fetch you out some sweetgum, an' be purty quick about it.'

"Brer Fox 'low dat dey aint nothin' easier dan dat; an' when Brer Rabbit turn 'roun' an' break inter a run, Brer Fox tuck out atter 'im licketty split, an' 'twuz in about ez much ez Brer Rabbit kin do ter keep Brer Fox fum ketchin' 'im sho nuff, dough dis wan't in de bargain. When dey come ter de place, Brer Rabbit, he dodge ter de left, an' Brer Fox come mighty nigh runnin' right inter de tree. He stop, he did, an' look 'roun' fer ter see how de lan' lay, an' den he went ter de tree whar de Bees live at, an' knock on it wid his walkin'-cane, an' holler an' tell de Bees fer ter fetch 'im some sweetgum, an' fer ter fetch it in a hurry.

"Brer Rabbit, he got off a little piece, an' den stop fer ter see what gwineter happen. He aint had long ter wait nudder, kaze it want no time 'fo' he seed Brer Fox snap at hisse'f, fust on one side an' den on de yuther. Den he quit snappin' an' try ter wipe de

Bees out'n his face an' eyes, an' den he got down on de groun' an' roll over an' over. De mo' he roll de mo' he want ter roll, tell bimeby it look like he wuz gwine 'roun' like a whirlygig. An' he wan't only rollin'; he wuz squallin' all de time like he had his han' kotch in a steel trap.

"He aint roll dis way long, kaze it got so hot fer Brer Fox dat he fetched one squeal an' broke out thoo de woods like de Ol' Boy wuz atter 'im. Ez he run de Bees strung out behime 'im so thick dat dey look like a fog, an' den dey close in on 'im. 'Taint no needs fer ter tell you what happen ter Brer Fox. When de Bees let 'im 'lone, he wuz a plum sight. He lay dar groanin' an' lickin' hisse'f fer de longest, but bimeby, 'long todes night, he got up an' drag hisse'f off home. Brer Rabbit, he stayed watchin' what de upshot wuz gwineter be, an' when de swarm wuz at its biggest, he des lay down on de groun' an' holler an' laugh tell he can't laugh no mo'; but 'long 'bout de time when he think Brer Fox is able fer ter git on his foots ag'in, Brer Rabbit jump up an' crack bofe heels tergedder, an' dance off home des ez spry ez any er his chillun."

The Bees make it warm for Brer Fox

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"What do you think of that?" Wally Wanderoon inquired of the professional story-teller.

"You ask me," replied that individual, "but if I answer you, you'll abuse and vilify me, and threaten me with all sorts of punishments."

"Not this time," said Wally Wanderoon. "I'm curious to know what you think about the story."

"Well, to tell you the truth," responded the professional story-teller, "I have never heard anything like it. It is probably negro folklore, but to be candid with you I don't see the point of the tale."

"Huh! I bet you Brer Fox seed p'ints in it an' felt um too," remarked Drusilla with a show of indignation. "I hear my granny tell dat tale long 'fo' Miss Susan dar wuz born. But dat needer here ner dar," she went on. "What I want ter know is when we er gwine ter git away fum here. It's long past de time when deze chillun oughter bin startin' home. I aint noways skeer'd, but I'd like ter know what I'm a-doin' an' when I'm a-gwineter do it."

"Why, it's early yet," remarked Wally Wanderoon. "There is certainly time for another story."

"Not like dem what dat man in de box tells," remarked Drusilla.

"And I wanted to introduce you to the Doodang, one of the most interesting creatures you ever saw."

"Not me!" exclaimed Drusilla. "I don't wanter know no yuther creeturs 'cep' dem what I'm acquainted wid. You'll hatter scuzen me."

"Some other time will do as well," said Wally Wanderoon, "though I'm afraid I won't be here when you want to come again."

"Are you going away?" Sweetest Susan inquired.

"Yes; I am going to find the Good Old Times we used to have if I am compelled to travel the wide world all over; and I hope to find a better story-teller than the one you have heard, or else find a remedy for his scientific foolishness, which is a disease hard to cure."

"I liked his stories very well," said Sweetest Susan.

"And so did I," remarked Buster John.

"He too long-winded ter suit me," Drusilla declared.

"Well, I'll see all of you again," said Wally Wan-

deroon. "I'll have to come back to feed the Doodang, and then we'll have some stories that are stories."

"Please come before we move to town," Sweetest Susan insisted. "We are going to move next year."

"If I can," replied Wally Wanderoon. "But it's a pity you are going away from the countryside. You'll think of it many a long and lonely day."

"Why, we are back where we started from!" exclaimed Buster John, looking around. "How did we get here and not know it?"

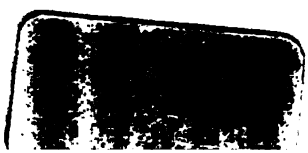
But Wally Wanderoon was no longer with them. He had disappeared. The modest home of Mr. Bobbs was in plain view, and this prevented the children from a bewilderment which, under other circumstances, would have been troublesome.

"Does you-all reckon dat we've seed what we seed an' heard what we heard? It seem mo' like a dream dan dreams deyse'f."

"Well, we couldn't all dream the same dream, could we?" Buster John inquired with some show of con-

tempt for the very natural doubt expressed by Drusilla.

This seemed to settle the matter with the children, and, after seeing Billy Biscuit safe home, they found it necessary to make preparations for returning to theirs, for the sun was low in the sky.

THE END

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